# MALIGN FIESTA

## Wyndham Lewis

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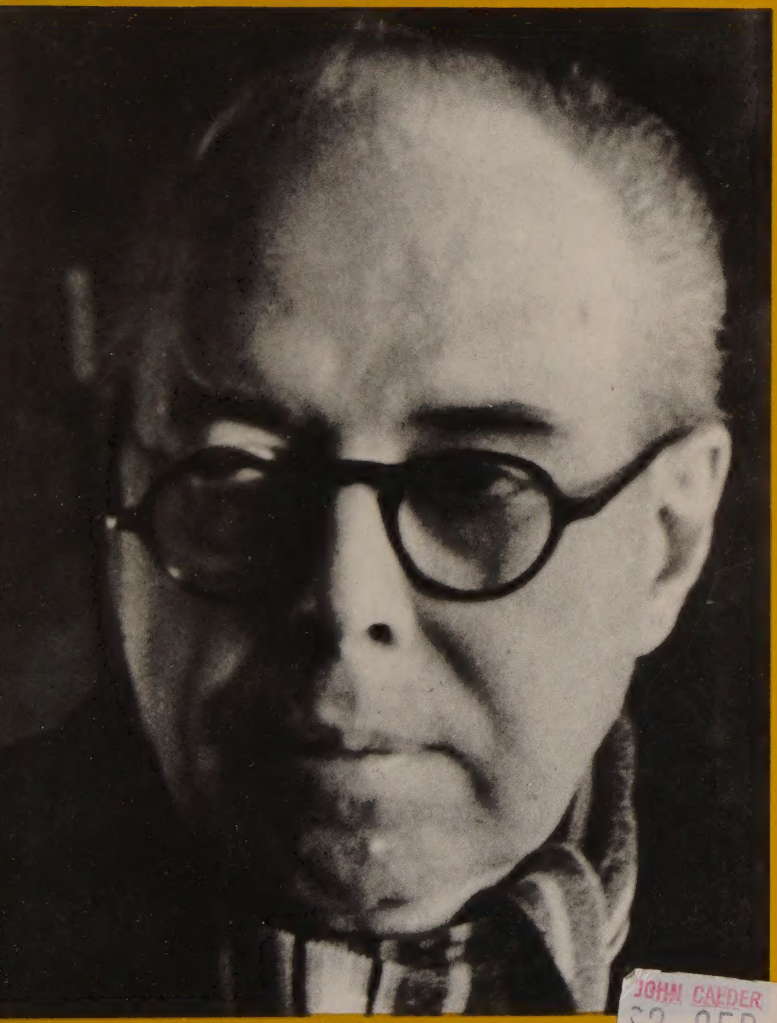

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# MALIGN FIESTA

BY

WYNDHAM LEWIS

*A Jupiter Book*

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# 1. A PARTY OF FIVE

## I

THERE WAS A SLIGHT, a frigid, mist, but in the monstrous starlight, fading but still visible, something like a scene in a ballet was in progress. The light of the heavens struck, with a ghastly glare, into a defile, or was this what we should think of as an uncouth passage connecting one street with another? A deep trench, or a cutting, had been made, approximately twelve feet deep, having inclined walls of undressed earth, and this cavernous trench evidently served for people passing through a territory very little cultivated, with only a few rosebushes. But it was not daylight yet.

There were five figures in this deep cutting, who were behaving very strangely. Three of them were suggestive of the Orient, and two Europeans, apparently intoxicated, withstood what seemed to be an attack. The five figures were exchanging hollow buffets, and it was with the actions of a dance that they delivered them, darting hither and thither in an unreal way.

Was this a stick-up by Asiatic thugs, in an Alexandrian suburb, or outside the modern Antioch? Were these three wild-eyed footpads, smelling of garlic and the sweat of many days spent in torrid landscapes, falling upon two British travellers, the worse for drink, perhaps the victims of knock-out drops?

But, should this represent a genuine misadventure, where were the flashes of knives, where the bitter *corps-à-corps*, in the passionate make-believe of these marionettes?

Marionettes! For was this indeed five of the male performers appearing in a *ballet-moderne*, practising at night one of their breath-taking routines?

Suddenly there comes a halt to surmise. All five figures desisted from aggression, in a manner suggesting that the British had become too enfeebled to proceed. They propped themselves up in a dispirited row, against the high wall of the cutting, on one side of the starlit path. The most diminutive of the quintette, a fat and nervous figure, with a frantic abrupt-

ness flung himself forward from the slope against which he lay all but erect, fell upon his hands, and then shot his feet up into the air. The clown of the party evidently; for he walked upon his hands backwards and forwards, and then was heard to crow. After that he stood on his head for some minutes. Then he crowed again, sprang to his feet, and stood, swinging from side to side a kind of bag or satchel. Turning, he started dancing up the lane, swinging his satchel aimlessly to and fro, the others, with much less *brio*, following him.

These five as yet unidentified persons emerged in a minute or two upon a hill, lined with buildings which were majestic white blocks. A car hooted higher up, just before the hill turned to the right, as if announcing that it saw them. The small man danced up the incline, stopping at the foot of a wide marble stair. The steps led to a front door standing between pillars and the house's face was a windowless arrangement of vertical slabs, the centre standing out like a bisected tower, two slits down its sides.

When the small man nimbly mounted the six steps, and pressed a bell, there was a sound like a gong inside. There was a long pause, when again he made the gong sound. There was a further pause, and then the door opened a very little; the small man vanished through the slit. The door was closed.

The small man was the Bailiff. He was almost in the dark, but he knew his way, and stepped out briskly in this carpeted well, in this lofty, black hall of his ancestral dwelling. Two domestics moved in the darkness, one of them adjusting his collar, the other accompanying the Bailiff towards the rear of the house. A sound of a lift was heard. When it stopped an old lady came out of it in a recess of the hall. Large spectacles were upon her square nose. An anonymity reminiscent of the windowless front of the house marked the falling black segments of her robe, but two hands shot out and she embraced her son. Speaking in a Semitic language, she said, "My darling little elephant! from what I heard, it seemed that your arrival was to be expected almost at once. And here you are, as full of your little self as ever. Are you well?"

"As well as a man can be who is ruined."

"Tut tut," the mother objected.

"I have two secretaries outside. There are also two young men I have brought from Third City. Please put them up for

a night or two ... My bag, please," he called to the servant, who hastened silently across the hall with his bag. Whereupon the Bailiff led the way into a room facing the lift. The servant left this room a moment later, and made his way quickly into the great opacity, retraced his steps towards the front door, which he opened slightly, and beckoned to the four figures waiting at the foot of the steps outside. When these had arrived and made their way, one by one, through the slit, he closed the door again. Seemingly it was the idea not to allow too big a slice of daylight to dispel the gloom of this windowless tower which resembled another medium than air, which to the creatures within was as necessary to life as the earth's atmosphere is to men.

Pullman appeared to be adapting himself to this unknown medium, with great unsteadiness following the servant into the black hall, and occasionally stopping. He could, in fact, see nothing, but followed the silently moving figure ahead of him, who stopped when he stopped, and, without looking around, was able to adjust the rate of his advance to that of the following man. Satters was not quite so successful as the servant, for once or twice he stumbled into Pullman, and on one occasion nearly caused him to lose his balance.

This progress, kept on its course owing to the forward movement of a grey silhouette, terminated in Pullman's stumbling into the room where the sepulchral lady and her shadow, the ex-Bailiff, awaited him. In bowing before the figure of the lady, as silent as her servants, he nearly fell to the floor, but was prevented from doing this by the Bailiff, who moved forward to meet him. He supported him for a moment, and then Satters and Pullman rolled down, side by side, upon the same seat. They were brought something green and effervescent to drink. This rapidly dispelled their stupor. The Bailiff, meanwhile, could be seen disappearing in the direction of the lift. Then their hostess came to life. She spoke in broken English.

"You came good?" she said.

"Quite well, thank you," Pullman told her.

"Good," she said in French. "I hope you speak French? I know very little English."

Pullman nodded slowly, and they conversed henceforth in French.

"Were the stars troublesome?" she inquired.

"I beg your pardon, Madam?"

"Oh yes," the old lady corrected herself. "Of course the gravitation is at times difficult. You become a metaphysical being, but all the same there is some kind of gravitation."

Pullman stared at her. "Is there?" he asked.

"Gravitation? Oh yes. Canopus is a very great star, and you must remember that Third City is the other side of that."

"Good gracious me." Pullman stared stupidly ahead.

"Even with the speed of light, it is a long journey. We do longer ones, and speak of Third City as a 'Neighbour'; but it is a long way away."

The old lady had obviously just risen from her bed. Her toilet had been archaic, but she can never have departed very much from an archaistic shell in which her life now persisted. It was early in the morning and the household had been awakened by their arrival. Her face was of a far more formidable cast than that of her son; with its square beak more protrusive and bony, with her filmed eyes, like those of a bird, and the fierce teeth above the chin like a box, square and jutting, it was a vulpine mask. The metallic silver of the hair, as though of a false white, the awful pallor of the face, the deadly black of the tight mantilla, and the rest of her person suggestive not of a human body concealed by layers of black cerements but of some kind of form crouching there perhaps, a bejewelled claw at times bursting out, she was an evil apparition. This impression was not lessened by the use of the French tongue, for she hissed it, buzzed and rattled it, in such a way that, although she spoke excellent French, she made it seem a language intended to express nothing but terrifying thoughts.

As she spoke of the enormous size of the star Canopus, Pullman saw a vastness, from which his spirit shrank, where the thought of this old being, moving with the speed of light across the universe, elicited the picture of a flashing witch, clutching a metaphysical broomstick in an astral night.

She rose, and slid away through the open door, and there was the lisping of a distant interrogatory. The voice of Satters sounded soft and blunt to his ear.

"Pulley, what was that old Modom hissing about? She

looks as if she had just risen from her grave. I shouldn't like to meet her at night somewhere, would you, Pulley?"

"She is not the kind of person that I would wish to see by moonlight or by sunlight, alive or dead, anywhere in the world or out of the world."

"I have a faint buzz all the time in my head, like an insect flying," Satters said in an undertone, as if it had been not the kind of thing one would wish to publish.

"You have been a flying insect, my dear boy, for many hours at a great speed. At that of light."

"Me an insect, Pulley?"

"Yes, your plump English limbs shrunk to a metaphysical speck, to bring you down to a flying dimension, as it might be called. See?"

"Oh!" Satters did not understand, but he looked at him sideways uneasily.

Pullman continued to observe him. "I too," he said, "exist in a dim buzz. My skin is shivering, though I am warm."

"I've got that too. My teeth were chattering just now, and my nails—oh, it seemed as if someone was fitting them on, you know."

"Those sensations will soon pass," Pullman reassured him.

Satters was soothed a little, his master felt. Pullman shut himself off from his companion in order to take stock—in order to gather together his sensations since he had begun to resume his very problematical existence in these new surroundings—to scrutinize them and see what they added up to—these reactions to what was not only a new place but a new situation. First and foremost his new environment—its colour, its smell, its absence of sound, its aggressive suggestiveness of a nothingness which continually grew in intensity was of course not to his taste—he did not like the windowless hall, lit by two small hooded lamps. The eyes of the domestics were like those of animals existing in the darkness; and there was that faint trace of an odour which he recognized; its association was demonic, it had sickened the air of Fifth Piazza a the time of the meeting of the infernal Embassy and the Padishah's representative, and the Bailiff's parties would have been sweeter if there had not always been a taint of it there. But he was in the land of Hell, and that was the theme smell of that region, he supposed. Then he was not attracted by the Bailiff's parent.

These were all reactions of a displeasing kind, and there were no other reactions.

To have his body, however metaphysical it might be, reduced to an almost invisible existence, and then, like the magic of the mango tree, expanded precipitately to the size of the standard humanity, did not leave his reason unimpaired. He thought he ought to wait a little until these effects had worn off; but as far as *feeling* was concerned, he felt as would a man who was climbing a precipice, but suddenly knew that he would never reach the top. He was conscious, here, of the Abyss. There was not vertigo. But, as he had looked at the old woman who had just left the room, he knew that hers was one of the faces of death. He knew that he had made a mistake. But here he was: he folded his hands, and attempted momentarily to enter a blank, as it were, and to forget.

"Pulley!" Satters' voice was tremulous. "Where are we?"

"Oh, nowhere in particular." Pullman spoke testily; he did not feel equal, just then, to this responsibility. "I believe we are in the house of an old woman. We might be worse off. If this is the jumping-off ground for nothingness there are far worse things than nothingness."

He put his hand on Satters", and thus they sat for some time, perhaps half an hour.

## II

MUCH LATER THE SAME MORNING, at about ten o'clock, they had their breakfast in their apartment, near the top of the uncomfortably noiseless house. They had had three hours' rest—a break from which they had derived only a more oppressive headache. A large tray was brought into the room, and placed upon the table by an unsmiling man, who left behind him the impression that this menial act was disagreeable to him. He could speak no English, and shook his head with averted eyes when addressed in English, French, German, Italian, or any earthly tongue.

The atmosphere of a place where one has just arrived, one judges with most acuity from the people first entcountered there. Pullman was obliged to confess that the old lady emanated something so subtly discouraging as to maintain him in a mood of uneasiness, and her servants depressed him even more than she did.

As he returned his coffee-cup to its saucer, in an undertone he declared, "It is a pity. It is possible that I made a bad mistake in coming to this place."

Satters stopped eating. His fag's face, obtuse but painfully attempting to understand, became knitted and knotted; his eyes fixed themselves upon the inscrutably lowered eyes of his masterful senior. He wished those lids would rise, so that he could see their expression.

"We should have stopped in Third City, you mean, Pulley, not come here with the old Bail . . . with the Bailiff?"

"It is only an impression, you know."

"Couldn't we go back, Pulley?" he asked. "The same way that we came?"

"I wish we could," Pullman muttered, but he said no more. Satters continued to await some further oracle, but not for very long. The sausages on his plate powerfully attracted him.

Pullman looked with disapproval at the long horizontal window, about five feet from the floor. These windows along

the side of the house were of milled glass: it was only at the back that normal windows were found, leading on to a balcony. Except for the windowless front, these buildings appeared to approximate to the European. He supposed that there had been an Oriental city here to start with, and that it was in process of transforming itself—as Spain or Russia had been, at the beginning of the present era.

In about half an hour, the same domestic as had appeared with the breakfast tray made his appearance again, his purpose this time—not obvious at first—to remove it. He was terribly reminiscent of a domestic in a Grand Guignol play. One felt that he might suddenly produce a pack of cards, extract the knave of diamonds, and place it beneath the chair of, say, Pullman, and then leave the room, carrying away with him only the milk jug. He did actually, however, place everything upon a tray, and carried it out of the room.

As he was collecting the coffee-pot, or the butter-dish, he scrutinized for a moment, first Satters, and then Pullman; the latter returned the scrutiny phlegmatically. When the man had gone, the two objects of curiosity looked at one another and burst out laughing.—But Pullman laughed dully, for he knew it was not a laughing matter.

"He'll know us again!" said Satters.

"Yes," Pullman responded, "and I, on my side, shall certainly recognize him."

At this moment the Bailiff burst into the room. He was a breath of the old life, of life in Third City: they both felt drawn towards him, both felt wonderfully glad that he was there. This was a terrifying reflection upon the place in which they found themselves. Quite irrationally, the power he had exercised in the other place radiated him with authority here. Pullman did not even reflect that he might be very small beer in this new environment. He might merely be a well-to-do citizen, and nothing more.

But the "good old Bailey" would have been a ray of sunshine in his own right, and apart from the fact that he recalled what was now a happier life to these two castaways.

"Hahsey-hahsey," he crowed, "methinks I have caught my two little white mice in a despondent mood, *nicht wahr*?"

His two little white mice stood up at his entrance, and Pull-

man responded. "Any morning despondency is dispelled as if by magic at the appearance of your Excellency!"

"You are such a courtier, Pullman mee boy! I don't know whether it is true that you find my presence a tonic, but I do know that *you* have that effect upon me!"

"If I could only believe that I acted as a pick-me-up, your Excellency, I should be very happy." Pullman remained the courtier. "But is it possible that you are visited by despondency?"

The Bailiff, who had sat down, blew a heavy sigh.

"There are times, my dear Pullman, when space and time seem less resilient. Yes, habit is of quite extraordinary strength. For instance, I awoke this morning in Third City, I believed, and I put my hand out to press the bell to summon my valet. There was no bell there. I recalled where I was. I was not in my palace, but in the maternal residence. I should never see my palace again. I had dreamed I had a palace, thousands of servants, a sweet hotel in a wood. But that was a dream. I dreamed I was carried along in a litter, to the blast of trumpets and the hammering on the haughty drum. That was a dream, my dear fellow, and a very strange dream to have. Why did I have those dreams? To wake from such a resounding, such a splendid nightmare is a little sad. *Of course* there is such a thing as despondency for those inclined to such splendid dreams. You see, they are the kind of things I like—I like being carried about in a litter to the beating of drums, I am an Oriental, you see. The happy life for you is a very different thing from what it is for me. You would dream—if you could summon what you desired—a wild shore facing the Northern ocean, gulls screaming overhead. Perhaps, for perfection, you would be sitting in a dinghy—the smallest type of boat—dressed, for preference, in the oldest and dirtiest homespun: whereas I would be sitting in an enormous barge, with a hundred oarsmen. I am only happy with many men. You would be happy alone, with the enormous waste of the ocean.—That is why you gladden me, Pullman! Don't you see, don't you see!"

The Bailiff rose, a little slowly and painfully. "Excuse me for talking like this. Forgive me, Satters, my dear fag, and forgive me," looking at Pullman as it were wistfully, "forgive me, philosopher! I ought not to have talked about myself in

that way." He sat upon the table, and winked at Satters. "Yours is an adventurous life, is it not, Satters? Your chief takes you to queer spots, eh?"

The Bailiff crowed lightheartedly, as he swung his little leg backwards and forwards.

Satters blushed, smiled. "Does he, sir?" he said.

The effect of this conversation upon Pullman was to depress him extremely.

There was a pause, during which the Bailiff scribbled something upon a piece of paper. He put his pen away absentmindedly, then turned to Pullman.

"It would be better if you both stopped here for the next two days. The police are rather peculiar. If they did not recognize you—and you are obviously foreigners—they would be apt to arrest you. They do not speak any civilized language—you would just be making unintelligible sounds at one another; you understand? In case you are so foolish as to go out, here is the address of the house you are in at present." He handed Pullman the piece of paper upon which he had been writing. "It is not a safe-conduct, they would march you off and lock you up just the same . . . they could telephone to me. But my fatherly advice is 'Stay where you are for the present'"

All three were silent.

At last Pullman got up, and stood by the fireplace.

The Bailiff had been paring his nails.

"Will your Excellency receive some important position here?" Pullman asked.

"No," the Bailiff answered shortly. He added, "Not in the sense you mean. There are no such posts. Here, as in Third City, a supernatural being is in control: but not a shy one—anything but. And immeasurably tougher."

"Ah," Pullman said.

"The only posts there are here are such subordinate ones that they may be dismissed as *no* posts."

"What will you do then?" asked Pullman.

"I do not know. I may go to Earth."

Pullman vividly foresaw the Bailiff organizing the most disgraceful rackets in London or Paris or Naples, and smiled. The Bailiff smiled in answer.

"Well, why not?" he asked.

"It seems to me a good idea," Pullman told him. "There is a great scope for adventure on Earth. Will you be taking me?"

The Bailiff looked thoughtful. "Pullman, that was a joke. Do not let us refer any more to this pleasantry."

"You may rely upon my discretion."

Satters' voice was heard. "Is it a place here like Third City, sir?"

The Bailiff examined him with curiosity. "What have you in mind, young man? No, this is entirely different. You cannot do the things here you can do there. This is a quiet little place. The people are very serious. A fiend, as you call him, lives here, and he is very strict."

"It is hardly the charming little burg you described," Pullman ever so slightly remonstrated.

"Have you seen the fires of Hell so far? Is this street not a normal street in a modern city?"

Pullman was silent.

"I really did not recommend it as a health resort. But in a week or two you will know all about it, and we will discuss it then. Now be patient, and amuse yourselves in this large house for the next forty-eight hours. *Au 'voir*, my children, byezee-byezee."

He bounced out of the room, all fluttering fingers and twinkling eyes.

The morning was spent in preventing Satters from disappearing into the Slough of Despond. They lunched with their hostess. On either side of her square nose were two deadly cold black eyes: but this black immobility was very easily broken up. She did not appear to be bored at the presence of these two youthful strangers. When Pullman said to her, "Your husband was a Portuguese?" she seemed to crack into pieces, and burst into a hysterical cackle.

"Did *he* tell you *that*? The little elephant!" She dissolved into more explosive cackles. "It was very naughty of him."

"What," Pullman murmured, "what, Madame, was your husband? You don't mind my asking, I hope."

She recovered almost as suddenly as she had disintegrated. It was with much snobbish hauteur that she announced, "My husband was a high official. A very high official; he was the Supervisor of Dis. There is no higher post."

"What, Madam, is Dis?" Pullman inquired.

"Oh yes, it is where people are punished for their sins."

She was not interested to conceal anything. She babbled, without any consciousness of censorship. Pullman only availed himself of this in a very limited way, lest he should incur the displeasure of the Bailiff. He did say, however, that he could not understand why the police would arrest them at sight, and she explained that at once.

"There are no people in this city other than those doing Dis work. The police would think you were two sinners who had escaped. There are only Us and the Sinners— and you are not Us. See? Soon you will be seeing the convoys of newly-arrived Sinners from Earth. They are guarded by many police. It is hardly possible for them to escape. Escapes from Dis have been known to occur. No one could get very far however. The police are vigilant."

"Ah!" declared Pullman. "Ah!"

"What you mean, *Ah*?" the old lady demanded.

"Oh, I meant *Hum.*"

The old lady burst into shrieks of antinomic merriment. "*Oh you!*" she howled. "If you were a Sinner, and I were your guardian, I would tickle your pretty feet, and draw out your banter."

Pullman looked at her with alarm.

"Would that be legitimate?" he asked.

"*Bien sur!* I could shorten your tongue for an inch or two if it seemed to me too long." She fell into a paroxysm of sadic mirth.

"I seem responsible for strange fancies in your mind, Madam."

"Oh no," she protested. "We always talk like that here, it is *de la taquinerie,* that is all. You see, we have all had other human beings in our power. If you are fond of another person it is natural to think what you would do to him if you had him strapped down on a pallet in a punishment cell. We always imagine ourselves with scissors or hot irons in our hands!"

"You are trying to frighten me," Pullman told her.

"Oh no, Mr Pullman!" and she violently shook her head. "When my husband came home from working, in the evening, if I chattered too much he would say, 'I was working on a woman today who talked too much. What do you think

I did? I handed her over to the surgeon, telling him to arrange her mouth, to cut her tongue in strips, or shorten it and block up her sinuses—to do whatever was necessary to reduce her to a point where she can only just make herself understood. The surgeon answered, 'Very well. But that may make her more troublesome than ever.'—To this my husband answered, 'Then I will get you to cut her tongue out altogether.' You hear?"

"Oh yes."

"Well, Mr Pullman, that was not said in order to frighten me. It was a pleasantry."

"I get you. These things are such a commonplace that no one supposes another is seeking to intimidate when he refers to *charcuterie,* which plays such a large part in his day's routine."

"That is what I mean, Pullman—do you mind my not saying Mister?"

"If you had me strapped in the punishment cell, would you call me Mister?"

The old lady let fly with a ferocious cackle of clinical mirth, "Ah, *then* I might insist upon the 'Mister'."

Pullman turned to Satters, and said with a wink, speaking in English, "This Modom wants to call me Pullman and leave the *Mister* out. Shall I let her do that? Would you let her leave your *Mister* out?"

"Yes!" The old lady had a lighted eye riveted upon Satters. "What you think?"

Satters looked from one to the other. "Why not call him Pulley, Ma'am?" He was feeling familiar with this old lady, although she nearly made him sick by what he intuited was her table-talk, a talk which took all the colour out of Pullman's face, and seemed sometines to upset him.

"Fine, Satterthwaite." She spoke her English, "Good boy, you, good boy."

"Do those who devote their lives to the punishment of sin," Pullman inquired, "*never,* in domestic life, forget where they are? Do they, for instance, begin punishing their wives?"

The old lady paused for a moment. "Mr Pullman," she then said, "let me give you a piece of advice: you must be careful not to let your tongue run away with you. It is best not to indulge in *mockery* of our way of spending our lives. It is not

*funny* to punish a man for helping to liquidate a sacrament, or making a habit of simony."

"Madam, please. Thank you for your benevolent intentions, but I am not likely to do what you suggest. Remember that I was brought up by the Jesuits."

"Hum."

Pullman laughed. "What does hum signify?" he inquired.

"It is synonymous with *hah*!" the old lady croaked. "But let me answer your question about the effect of public life upon domestic life. Our neighbour," she pointed her jewelled finger towards the wall, "is a very famous surgeon—all his work has been with the Sinners. Well, he had a wife who was notorious for her nosiness." She shuddered. "We learned one morning that he had cut her nose off. He had momentarily believed that she was a Sinner."

"I can see how that might happen."

"That is the kind of remark against which I was warning you—let me finish my story. When she left the hospital the surgeon put another nose on her face, which everyone agreed was much better than the first. *And it was not an inquisitive nose.*—Do you see?"

"Yes. It is the moralist—the moralist with the knife—in family life."

The old lady nodded her head thoughtfully.

Pullman burst out laughing.

"You laugh, Pulley. You have no pity for that woman, who lost her nose. Hum. The joker is as cruel as the moralist."

Pullman protested vigorously. "Please. It was the moralist I was laughing at, not the wife of the moralist."

"It is most unsafe to laugh at the moralist, in the moralistic Matapolis," Madame Heracopoulos airily grated.

The whole time, this old witch is threatening, Pullman said to himself: so there must be no free-speaking in Matapolis. There can be no intelligent conversation. He considered it rather lucky that he had had this uninhibited chat with an intelligent inmate of this place.

As if she had overheard his interior monologue, Mrs H. spoke. "The way you speak, Pulley, is very amusing. People do not speak like that here. It is only Sinners who speak like that. Sometimes they are very amusing." She fixed her spectacles on her nose, and affected to examine him. "Perhaps *you*

are a Sinner. If you are, my dear, I wish I were younger. I would greatly enjoy being in a punishment cell with you."

"How horrible, Madam."

"Not at all. I have been much more attracted by Sinners than by members of our social circle. I used to wonder whether I had not some sin in me. I was allotted once to a woman whom I found very graceful and intelligent. She was a great Sinner. It was a Sexual Sin." She paused and looked at Pullman. "I will not tell you what I did to her—how I disfigured her first, and gutted her psychologically afterwards. I was praised for my work by the..." She spluttered with laughter. "You would say by Satan! He threw her shell to the... the wolves, for he said she was a very great Sinner. Horrified as I was by her sins I felt that I could like her very much if she had not sinned against the angelic world—if she had not been so filthy. We must not forget that we were intended to be semi-angelic. There are foulnesses which particularly offend the angelic nature, which is so naturally pure. So I had to look upon this woman as steeped in sexual foulness, every bit of her. But she spoke... well, so wisely, that I, who am only a very little angelic, at times faltered. At times I faltered."

Pullman listened with a growing misery. What an old liar the Bailiff was! What was his purpose in bringing him here? He could not guess what could have made it worth his while to burden himself with Satters and his own humble personality. Of what use could they be to him? What were they supposed to do in this *galère*—what possible *good* motive could he have had? Unless the Bailiff is mad, and has lost his sense of reality?

The Bailiff had assured him that Hell was a thing of the past... what would he say if he confronted him with the reality, as divulged by his mother? Would he brush it aside, as an old woman's hallucinations? Would that be his line?

After she had stopped speaking he still sat there meditating. He had become unconscious of her presence.

Satters was shuffling restlessly. Though understanding nothing of what his chief and this old hag were talking about, since they were speaking in French, there was much telepathic activity, and he had become afraid of something, he did not know what.

Pullman became conscious of a sound like the distant

rumbling of the tumbrils (he thought). But after a moment or two he understood that it was the aged woman, whose mirth was on the way. It was the muffled rolling of the phlegm, heralding an hysterical discharge. He had not long to wait. There was an outburst, which involved the use of her handkerchief, clearing the path for some deep shrieks of venerable wildness. She rocked backward and forward. When she had full use of her breath again, she spoke.

"Pulley, I know you will not like it, but you are behaving now exactly like a Sinner, when they first understand what is about to happen to them. They hear a piercing shriek, or the groans of someone in the next cell."

"Do you believe, Madam," Pullman asked almost violently, "that I am going to be tortured?"

She waved her hand impatiently.

"How can I say? I do not know anything about your sins. For that matter, I have no idea why my little elephant brought you here. He does such funny things. He has not confided in me. He may believe that you could enter the punishment service . . . you cannot stop here unless you enter that service. There are only two kinds of people here as I have said. The Sinners, and those who . . ."

"I see. Perhaps his Excellency will explain to me, now, what he proposes to do with us. For I am not alone."

They both looked at Satters, who looked back in terror at them.

"He is not old enough to be a Sinner," she observed. "What is more, he is not going to develop beyond that inoffensive age."

Satters burst into tears.

"Satters, my boy, there is nothing to cry for, please, Satters."

"Does he always do that?" she asked.

"It is his habit, when too much badgered."

"We have plenty of cry-babies among the Sinners" (she was informative). "They have spasms of self-pity."

"Poor creatures!" Pullman stretched himself nervously. "A sore trial the Sinners must be to their angelic attendants."

She gave an expressive shudder inside her laces and alpacas.

When they came out into the large, dark, windowless hall, inhabited by two mournful domestics, Pullman understood what had at first been so mysterious. Now he was in possession

of the key. What had been vaguely sinister was now plain sailing! This was the towering ante-chamber to the domesticity of an ogress. The two grey-faced domestics brooded all day, no doubt, upon delicious Sinners, subtly robbed of their beauty, or gallant gentlemen, reduced to whimpering shadows of themselves. They might still hold in their pinched nostrils the perfume of some outrageously impure descendant of Eve, whom they had dragged by the hair into the punishment cell, or they might prefer, during the long hours of servitude in this mausoleum, to remember the blood that wiped out the sins of the men of many races. And when they had seen these two little strangers enter the hall, in the company of their "young" master, they must at once have speculated whether these were Sinners, about to be subjected to private rites. The Bailiff's protégés had not seen the cold glare of anticipation, but Pullman, at least, had registered the violence lurking in this cemetery of Sinners, each executed spectre cemented into the ghastly minds of this pseudohumanity, whose life was death.

## III

When they reached their rooms, Satters, with the air of a dog who had misbehaved, furtively eyed Pullman. Then, seeing that the latter was silent, he burst into apologies.

"I'm sorry I made a silly ass of myself, Pulley. I don't know why I did it."

"Yes, what was it upset you after all?" asked Pullman.

"It was your face, Pulley. Your face got so pale, your expression . . . well, I've never seen you like that before. What was that old devil saying to you, Pulley? I knew by the way she was laughing that something was wrong. I can't explain why, I just had an odd feeling, as if I was alone in a little room, and someone was there with a cosh . . . That old girl gives me the creepy-weepies."

Pullman patted his squire upon his worried-looking hand. "You must not take the old humbug too seriously. She is our Bailiff's mother, remember. Her conversation was so repulsive that I felt sick at times. I can quite believe that I looked frightful."

Satters looked at him incredulously, but he cheered up.

"Another time I shall just cat," Pullman sighed. "That would not frighten you, would it?"

Satters beamed. "No, I should laugh. If the old girl makes you sick that is the best thing to do."

But Pullman had a lot to think about: he could not do that under observation by Satters. So, alleging sleepiness, he went into his bedroom.

Lying down on the bed he started a thorough substitution, in his general picture of this place, of the new for the old—the new being, of course, the information acquired at lunch. Why the Bailiff had not wished them to go out had become crystal clear. The entire community, in this little city, was wholly engaged in what was described as the "punishment of Sinners". All the houses in the street in which they found themselves were the residences of some inquisitor, some highly placed master of torture. When the Bailiff had described this as a quiet little city, that was correct. But he had not explained what it lived by, what was its main industry. There had been one piece of negative information, namely that "Hell" or

"Inferno" were altogether things of the past. This appeared to be incorrect. Why had this old crook misled him? What had been his idea in bringing him to this horrible place? Pullman asked himself idly whether the Bailiff, as he still thought of him, had any kind of scruple as regards himself? (He did not suppose that poor old Satters would be taken seriously enough to excite a scruple.) Had he any plan at all, this "little elephant", for preserving their liberty?

Why the Bailiff had brought them there must clearly have something to do with himself: he must believe that Pullman would be useful to him in some way. The ex-Bailiff had, on the other hand, since they had been here, assured Pullman that he—his Excellency—had nothing to look forward to in this shambles, in the way of a post. He had mentioned that he might move to Earth. At the time he had thought that that might be where he would next propose to transport Pullman.

If that were his design, what would be the attitude of this community of fiends to such an expedition? Nor had he any idea how a much-lamented corpse of yesterday would be received upon Earth. Pullman gathered that he did not know enough, as yet, to be able to see very far into the future.

On his return, shortly before dinner-time, the Bailiff was in extremely high spirits. Pullman presumed that this must be regarded as a good sign for Satters and himself. There was some excellent wine for dinner. Pullman indulged in this, and affected to be more under its influence than was in fact the case. The Bailiff's reaction to the spectacle of an elated Pullman (a reaction he, Pullman, would closely observe) might betray something. But however closely he watched, nothing came to light. He was talking principally about old days in Third City—a very jocose treatment of phases of his career. He made no secret of the extent to which he had fooled the Governor. It struck Pullman that, in retrospect, the Bailiff was merrily continuing to discuss what had been the subject of his conversation elsewhere, earlier in the day, perhaps earlier in the evening. The old mother seemed to be greatly enjoying the narrative of her "little elephant's" rogueries. For there was no denying that he was a little rogue elephant, if he might be identified symbolically with that species.

After dinner they played a game of cribbage. That con-

tinued for a little, and Pullman ended by having a pocket full of the currency of Hell. It resembled very nearly the economic system of Third City. The sight of the familiar Roman coinage delighted Satters. They went up to bed in a rosier mood. The sleep of both doubly "displaced" persons was wonderfully sound.

A repetition of events on the first morning now occurred. Immediately after their breakfast tray had been removed, the Bailiff burst hilariously in, saluting Satters with a kiss on the top of his head.

"I learn that he wetted his cheeks yesterday, with inexplicable tears."

"Not inexplicable, your Excellency. He has much to grieve about, has he not?"

The Bailiff looked, with what appeared to be real surprise, at the rugged, pinkish face of the youthful wanderer.

"Has he cause for grief?" he inquired.

"Your mother was very frank yesterday as to what was in store for us."

The Bailiff had an irritable gesture. "She has no idea at all what is in store for you. That was to be decided. These are questions to which she has not access. How silly she is!"

"However, your Excellency, the account you gave me of this little health spot was not quite accurate, was it?"

Once more the "little elephant" became hilarious. "Do not worry your head about that, Pullman. Just be patient." Nothing further was revealed. He vanished merrily, all fluttering fingers and dancing toes as before.

There was going to be another day of waiting, without any concession to the fact that they were much better informed now—which, of course, made waiting considerably more painful. What the "little elephant" was busying himself with Pullman could not guess. Was it anything connected with Third City, or was he visiting high dignitaries of Hades, or had he commercial interests here or elsewhere? They must cool their heels in this whitewashed private prison. What did the frivolous "little elephant" imagine that they did to distract themselves; play leap-frog, or hunt-the-slipper? In spite of skittishness, it was probable that he had a good deal to preoccupy him, and whether his pair of tame white mice found time heavy on their hands or not was not a priority consideration, it must be supposed.

When lunch-time came, Pullman and the aged gossip once more engaged in chit-chat. He decided to extract more information. Their hostess, it might be, was the Bailiff's medium, by means of which they were apprised of the true shape of things hereabouts. He supposed that the Bailiff felt that his mother might as well, in her table-talk, open their little eyes, otherwise they might have expected to be installed in something like the Phanuel Hotel. The sooner they realized how extremely different it was, the better. So, taking her to be a licensed informant, he started by inquiring what race it was occupied this metropolis of inquisition.

"We are known as Nephalim," Madame Heracopoulos told him. "That is a Hebrew word, of course. You perhaps have heard how a great many angels grew tired of the sterility of their life in Heaven, and, when they established themselves, in some sort, on the Earth, according to the view of God Almighty (as you call him), most improperly had carnal intercourse with women. Eventually a race of giants came to pass. We poor little squarenosed persons were the outcome. We have enough of the angelic and the supernatural in our blood to cause us to differ from men. We live much longer, to begin with. Our relation to the material universe is of a different kind altogether from that of men—although we eat and drink and... do other things, just as they, oh... you understand. We cannot be killed so easily. It is amazing how easy men are to kill. In punishment cells, you turn round and find that the man or woman is dead."

"Really, how interesting," Pullman was, in fact able to detach himself from his present situation sufficiently, so that his inquisitive mind reacted in a lively way to the description of this peculiar people, so similar superficially to men, and yet so superiorly endowed in many ways. "We are fragile, compared with you," he said. "It is evident, is it not?"

"Yes," she agreed. "That is unquestionable. Our nervous systems must be very dissimilar. I remember in the early days, when I had little experience of Sinners, I began working on a woman. I was removing the cuticle from her buttocks, so that she would be unable to sit down. I had given her a local anæsthetic. When the anæsthetic began to wear off, and she found she was unable to sit down, she lay on her side and appeared to go to sleep. But five minutes later—I had been

talking to a colleague, and was not attending to my patient for about that time—there seemed to be something unusual about her. Then I discovered that she was dead. It was fright, I suppose."

"Or boredom," Pullman suggested.

"Boredom?" she asked sharply.

"All I mean is, that when she realized that you were beginning to torment her, and that life as she had known it was at an end, she may have wished to be dead, don't you think? It may not have been shock, but the will-to-live may suddenly have ended; especially if she had been a woman for whom having the skin peeled off her bottom maliciously was so unlike anything in her experience that there was nothing to live for.—Not only is our nervous system very dissimilar from yours, but also our psychology is profoundly different. That is self-evident. For instance, the conversation we are having glaringly demonstrates that."

"I do not understand you," she said darkly.

"Of course you do not. We both think and feel in an entirely different manner, Madam."

"How so?" she asked sharply.

"If I spoke to another human being as you have been speaking to me, the other human would regard me either as a brute, or as a madman."

"Are you calling me a brute?" she squawked.

"No," he soothed her. "How can you think that? Of course I do not. You are not a human being, are you? I do not expect from you human reactions. In fact, I vividly anticipate an exemplary inhumanity."

"Thank you," she wheezed dubiously.

"Let me explain. I am a human being, like the Sinners who have been tortured by you all your life. Now I have come among you by accident, as it were—under the wing of your son. Right. Now you at once begin freezing my blood by telling me how you and your fellow-citizens spend your lives in tormenting people of my sort.—That is what human beings would call *inhuman* or just bad form. But, as you are not human, it would be ridiculous to call you inhuman, in our sense of that word, would it not?—Do you follow me?"

The old woman burst into a loud cackle.

"I see what you mean, Mr Pullman!" she stammered out.

"You mean that I thought of you as a Sinner. That is it, that is *it*! Well, that is true, I did. All along, I have thought of you as a Sinner. I have, in my mind, undressed you, and perhaps handed you over to the surgeon to have you ementulated. I should want to cut the masculinity out of you, to start with."

"What a good idea," he laughed "inhumanly".

"Then I should administer cantharides to a beautiful girl Sinner, and lock her in the cell with you."

"Brilliant!" he cried.

She frowned, and was silent.

"You have human emotions you know," he whispered.

She looked up, brightening.

"One more question," he pressed. "You referred to your race as 'square noses'. What did you mean by that?"

"What did I mean?" she repeated. She hooked a finger around her nose. "Why, our noses are square, are they not? The great archangels who are here are extremely personable —very much so. Their noses have a square form, in every case. There are no 'Roman noses' as you English call it. The Semitic nose is nowhere met with. We inherit our squareness, Mr Pullman, from the great angels. Why, the angel you call God, he has a great square nose as well. When he and Satanael worked side by side, in the golden clouds, in the beginning of the world, it is said that one said to the other, 'Have you noticed, brother, that everything in the universe is round—the sun is round, the clouds are rounded, our limbs are rounded, our bodies, our heads, are rounded. Only our noses are square?'"

Pullman and the inhuman old harpy laughed naturally together for the first time.

Satters, although he did not understand a word of French, found himself in the end crying in sympathy—this time blubbery with mirth, because the others were so uproariously afflicted with the ridiculous.

"Le voilà qui est encore en larmes," she cried. "Quel enfant gâté! Etes-vous homosexuel, Monsieur Pullman?"

"No." Pullman shook his head, then with his hand, he wiped tears out of his eyes. The uproarious lines left his face. "Can you explain," he asked her, taking no further notice of her impertinence, "how it is that you are exactly the same size as men? Your origin suggests that you should be taller."

"There is a very learned man here, he is President of our

little University. I asked him that very question once. He gave a good answer, I think. 'All over the Earth,' he said, 'whether in Africa, Asia, Europe, the height of men varies between six feet or a little over, and five feet, or a little over. Evidently that is the appropriate height for a man. Titans are another matter. But the angels, who are titans of enormous size, can reduce themselves quite easily, and must have done that to have sexual intercourse with a woman. The 'giants', who were the earliest offspring of these, would assume for good the height and habits of an average man, and so they would arrive at us.'"

"Thank you, Madam. It's all quite clear. You have angels here, have you not?"

She waved her hand out of the window. "Over there, back there is a hump—I will not say a hill—upon which live upward of thirty thousand angels. Every week they resume their full heights and all are marshalled outside the city. It is a tremendous spectacle, this mass of great giants. These are a few of the original rebel host which left what you know as 'heaven' with Satanael—Sammael is the name we use for him here. They have all reduced themselves down to something considerably over six feet, and all live in houses of a normal size. It is a big colony out there, Sammael living on the outskirts, where he has his office building too. Most of these supernatural beings, living as men, are chaste. Sammael is very puritanic, and does not like to see women in this colony. Even as daily women, or as cooks, he will not tolerate them. Men do all the domestic work. Most of these old comrades of his, as I say, think and act in conformity with this strong prejudice against women entertained by their leader. Should one of that society of comrades break the unwritten law, and take a woman to live with him, he is obliged to leave it. He goes to some place, hundreds of miles away, where also there are angels, but not so particular."

"Thank you, Madam. That is very interesting."

They had got through the lunch and moved into the drawing-room, where they had coffee. Pullman noticed a copy of a book by Mauriac.

"Oh," he said, picking it up. "You are able to get French books. But you must find it very difficult to read them?"

She looked up angrily. "Do I know French so little?"

"No. Of course not, Madam. What I meant was that the psychology of people living in society on the Earth must be so alien to you that it must constitute an insuperable obstacle to understanding, or, at the least, to enjoyment."

She looked at him dully, her expressionless eyes seeming to aim blows at him. He turned his head away. This strange old square-nosed squaw could hand it out, but was not able to take it. Hers was a one-way world.

The day went by, hectic and monotonous, with Satters' nervousness developing hourly, until by nightfall he was proposing to leave the house, and see what things were like down in the city.

"You would be arrested within a quarter of an hour," Pullman told him.

"Why?" Satters asked. "Why not give it a try? You mustn't believe everything that old woman says, Pulley. I don't trust that Modom, she has her eye on me."

"Has her eye on you? Only when you cry. Well, anyhow, it is as you like. You will find yourself in the jug, and you will be lucky if you don't end among the Sinners."

"Sinners my arse! I'm going. You can stop with the old girl."

"O.K., Satters. You know best. They will cut your nose off to start with, then they will take the skin off your behind, and then . . ."

Satters grew very pale. "Pulley, that is why you get to look like you do, when she is talking to you . . . isn't it?" Satters spoke no more of making a sally into the unknown.

That evening the Bailiff came in late, and Pullman had never seen him so despondent, and so taciturn. At dinner he talked a good deal with his mother, in the language of the place—and in a low voice, so that the domestic could not hear.

All he said to Pullman was a few words, spoken as an aside. "Things have not been going as they should, I am afraid, Pullman."

That was all he would say, and they went to bed under the shadow of the Bailiff's "fear".

"I shall cut my bloody throat," Satters declared.

Pullman said nothing. But he thought it might become necessary.

## IV

It was always within a quarter of an hour of the removal of the breakfast tray that their fate was settled for the next twenty-four hours. They began to learn to expect the appearance of the bounding little Bailiff, and to hear from him his decisions. But he did not bound in at the appointed time on the following morning. It was a serious (but not a morose) Bailiff who entered their room and sat down. He was very neatly dressed in a sort of black *kaftan*, on his left breast a star.

"I am going to take you now to see the Devil in person," he told Pullman, without even a smile. "You must learn to think of him as Sammael. It was by that name that he was known when he lived on equal terms with God in the beginning of the world."

Pullman bowed his head.

"There is nothing terrifying about him in appearance. You will get on quite well with him."

"Pulley!" Satters' voice was low, in piteous appeal.

"It is all right, Satters," said Pullman, with a gentle smile. "There is no danger at present."

"Yes, Satterthwaite had better stop here. We shall not be more than about one hour."

As the Bailiff's head was turned away, Satters shook his head violently.

"Could not Satterthwaite come with us—sitting by the chauffeur, if you think that is better?" Pullman asked.

"Yes, certainly." The Bailiff was still unsmiling. "We must start at once. Are you ready, Pullman?"

Pullman went into his bedroom; he took up the comb and arranged his hair so that it fell in the way which he regarded as the most becoming. Then he returned. They all three went downstairs in silence. The Bailiff sat with Pullman, Satters sat beside the inscrutable chauffeur, who did not even look at the youthful Sinner.

"This is a very much greater angel," the Bailiff said quietly, "than the Governor in Third City. We consider him the greatest being in the world. For whatever reason, he likes being democratic. That is all I need say."

"You have said enough, your Excellency."

They stopped at a large, white, windowless house. There was a short paved path leading to it, across beautifully kept grass. Then there were three wide steps before the front door, outside which stood several armed police. The Bailiff and Pullman advanced along the path, the Bailiff spoke to one of the police officers. This man fell back, and they mounted the steps; as they did so the front door slowly opened. A domestic appeared within, and he led them across the modest hall to a double door.

Had Pullman not been so elaborately informed regarding the terrible inner life of this city, he would have approached these doors with very different feelings. When they entered the room, which was a mediumsized office, a tall dark man rose from a swivel chair, in which he had been seated before a desk, and allowed his eyes to rest upon the stranger. Pullman cast his eyes down, and his mouth assumed those strict and staid lines, which were survivals of his religious youth. What he had seen, before he lowered his eyes, was a classically handsome, young middle-aged man, the regulation six-foot-three of the angel, heavy shoulders, of superbly athletic build. His head was thrown back; it was large, with thick, dark, well-ordered hair. His face was a pale mask, with strong black eyes which said nothing, but contained a conventionally amiable light, the lips smiled slightly. What he most looked like was an American of high managerial class, Indian blood, perhaps, accounting for an invincible severity.

The thought which formed inside Pullman's mind was: he is not engaged himself in the "Sinner" business.

"I am delighted to make your acquaintance, Mr Pullman," a deep, gently growling voice said. A large warm hand grasped his. "If you don't object to shaking hands with the Devil!" and the same easy unruffleable personality rolled out a strong engaging laugh.

"Here, sit here, Pullman," he heard the Bailiff's voice. And he sat down. Then he allowed himself to look up, with a sociable smile on his face.

"Though I am delighted to see you, Mr Pullman," the great historical figure observed, "I cannot imagine how, or why, you got here. Having reached a perfectly pleasant place, I mean

Third City, *why* you should have succumbed to the wiles of our friend here, I cannot guess."

Pullman looked smilingly towards the Third City potentate, who seemed somehow extremely small in his very ample chair: he had the air of diving his head down as if avoiding a blow, and when he looked up there was something so like despair upon his mobile face that Pullman looked away.

"Well, sir," he answered Sammael. "I understood that at any moment Third City might be destroyed; and there was the fact that I had been more or less identified with his Excellency."

"He is a very attractive talker, I know, but I hardly, myself, would go to Hell with him!" Sammael beamed at Pullman, but appeared to avoid looking in the direction of the attractive talker.

"Well, sir," laughed Pullman, "upon my home planet, I might have acted differently. Is there no way of remedying . . ."

"Of course what we could do is to transport you back again. But the worst of it is that you are a writer. And indeed, you are a satirist . . ."

"I could give you every undertaking not to speak, much less to write . . ."

The disarming Fiend, however, laughed, and said, "The trouble about that gentlemanly undertaking is that I do not possess your engaging credulity."

"I do assure you, sir . . ."

"No, Mr Pullman, we must think of something else." The superb host rose, and came around his desk.

"Gentlemen, let us move into another room. We have got as far as we can today in this matter. Come with me into a more comfortably furnished room, where we can talk more at our ease."

The visitors waited for the urbanely august presence to pass out of the room, and then they followed with alacrity. They moved to the opposite side of the hall—but more to the rear. Soon they were in a small room which could only be described as *cosy*—so paradoxial an epithet to associate with anything belonging to the Devil! But Pullman felt that the suavely inscrutable being who was receiving them was highly conscious of the paradox: and then he caught sight of a basket by the side of the fireplace, and noticed that something in it

was moving. He bent forward, and saw, with a new alarm, that it was a fair-haired child. He sat back and caught the eye of Satan—a warm, inquiring eye, which had been lying in wait for his.

"It is an orphan," murmured Sammael (to adhere to the name insisted on by the Bailiff).

"Indeed!" exclaimed Pullman. "How kind of you to look after this little girl." And as he said it he was thinking that probably this monster had been responsible for the elimination of its parents. Why did he give refuge to the child? Just sadism of some kind.

He found that both of them were looking at him, and then the Bailiff whisked *his* eyes away, as if frightened. Pullman allowed himself to gaze with just the correct amount of sentiment (he judged) upon the attractive little face.

"How charming!" he said softly. "Children inhabit a world like a perpetual dream." He stooped forward and stroked the flaxen head, and then he reminded himself that he was behaving as though the child had been a dog, and drew back as if to dissociate himself with his recent gesture.

"Mr Pullman!" It was with a rather sharp accent that his name was produced. He looked up quickly and saw that Sammael had his hand upon his largest and bestknown book.

"You see, I was lucky enough to secure this: I have been reading it. It depresses me. Is the world so evil... and so ignoble?"

Pullman's heart sank: but he sat up quickly, and did his best.

"I fear, sir, that it is. Often I have had that said to me, almost in your words. My answer must always be the same: I did not make the universe: if I had I should have made it differently."

The answer appeared to please Sammael. "Neither did I, nor he whom you call God. But it was my old companion who had the bright idea of starting the race of men, by means of Eve. It was over that we quarrelled. For he was a very bumptious man and wanted me to applaud his handiwork. That was the last thing I could do. There was no *battle,* of course, as it is always represented. I simply left him, and many of my friends came with me. I consider that this race of pygmies, who, with their beastly women, live a clownish and sinful life—that to be responsible, in part, for the creation, and

for the protection of this ignoble species, proves him whom you call God to be of an inferior nature. I told him so, and he shrank from me. He realized his base and unintelligent action.—But once I had established myself elsewhere he asked me to help (in a sort of scavenging capacity!). Ever since I have meted out punishment to man and to woman. I am not sent anything like enough of these disgusting little beings. And there are fewer Christians every year. It is rapidly becoming an Earth swarming with nothing but Sinners—an eventuality which the buffoon known as 'Almighty God' might surely have foreseen! As it is, men become more depraved every day—more vulgarly sensual, more grotesquely wicked. The spectacle of some little creature attaining to depths of dirtiness unequalled in the past, and actually believing he can deceive me, revolts me. There are some who think that, since they are dealing with 'the Devil', after all, their devilry may be sympathised with. Their way of reasoning is that to set a thief to catch a thief is not a very sound proverb: for will not a couple of thieves, or a couple of dirty blackguards, be apt to put their heads together. They are not intelligent enough to be suspicious of legend: not intelligent enough to say that, just as all those with whom we are at war are *devils*, as in politics, so in religion, the Devil, 'the Adversary', may be a very different person from what he is represented to be."

From the basket at the side of the fireplace came a scream so piercing that Pullman jumped: it was followed by the despairing cry of "Maman maman maman maman". And there it stopped, for Sammael had sprung across the room like an enormous cat, and covered the child's mouth with his hand.

"Alaine, tu fais de vilaines rêves, n'est-ce pas, ma petite?"

Sammael, with wonderful alacrity, lifted a hypodermic syringe from a metal box, plunged it into the child's arm. "Te voilà qui retrouve ta maman, dans les songes, n'est-ce pas! Va, ma chatte, toujours de belles rêves et à tout a l'heure, ma petite Alaine!" Sammael rocked the child in his arms, crooning to it in what was obviously its native language.

Would it be possible to imagine a more tender scene! But the diminutive scream, so piercingly plaintive, and the *mother*-cry which followed it, had made so violent an impression upon Pullman, that the soft, gruff crooning and lullaby (in combination with an ever-ready hypodermic syringe) pro-

duced a disagreeable effect of phoniness upon him. Everything was so rapid. The next moment it seemed Sammael was there in his chair again, looking at him. Pullman just had time to register the leap, like that of a noiseless cat—then the large and steady eyes were gazing into his. They did not find in Pullman's the appreciative sentimentality which was expected. There was coldness instead—the chill of disbelief, which he had not had time to conceal, and in the eyes of Sammael appeared a temperature so icy that, as the eyes of the visitor registered this terrible climatic change, his cheeks whitened as his eyes fell.

However, without any transition, the warm, social, rather guttural voice of Sammael made it clear, that, if he had been dangerously chilled within, there was to be no change at the surface. "That little girl is an orphan; her parents were monstrous Sinners, recently executed. But the child, of course, is incapable of sin and I hope will never fall into it. I was disinclined to leave her to the tender mercies of the punishment staff. Man is not a merciful being. I will shelter her for a while, and then see what can be done about placing her with some relatively kind woman."

"It is very kind of you to do so much," Pullman murmured.

"Oh, hardly that," Sammael said. "The men I employ are such frightful brutes."

"That is no exaggeration." Pullman heard the Bailiff's voice. The words seemed to dislocate everything for a moment. Pullman looked up at him in astonishment, but his miserable little face made him turn away.

The pleasant voice of their great host seemed to have hardened momentarily, as he said, "Well, let us change the subject, Mr Pullman. Let us talk about Monsieur Pullman jeune."

"Not a very interesting subject, sir. Above all to you, with your vast knowledge of the human brain. What is a human adolescent, an immature fledgling man? What is more dull than immaturity, and human immaturity at that?"

Sammael laughed softly.

"Why are you so humble?" he inquired. "There is no animal so *arrogant* as man. Are you a new kind of man, Mr Pullman? Have we, with you, an entirely new variety? That will be very interesting."

"With you, sir, I am not arrogant, I assure you," Pullman said at once. "The majority of men are excessively stupid. With *them*, no doubt, I develop arrogance. But that is not *pride*. In your company you will detect no trace of anything but a proper humility."

"That is a very adroit answer, Pullman . . . if I may drop the Mister." Sammael smiled in a cordial way. "I can say that, for myself, I am not *arrogant*. But then I know too much to be proud. The conceited are very small, are they not? The conceit of some of my Sinners would amaze you." He turned to the Bailiff, and said something in the speech of the locality. The Bailiff's face lighted up, and he answered in the same language, with a scornful laugh. It was the first time the old lightheartedness had appeared on his face since their arrival.

The host rose, saying, "Gentlemen, I have to go to a conference now. Come and see me again, Pullman; I will look around, and find you some suitable occupation. Meanwhile, you cannot stop with our friend here. There is a place which is not, I am afraid, the Phanuel Hotel: it is a very poor place. But it is an apartment which has two comfortable beds; it is run by a friend of mine, who speaks French, who will bring up your breakfasts, and provide you with anything you want. He was chef for the Police Officers' mess, and he is capable of cooking a good beefsteak, or excellent pancake.—It is free."

Pullman thanked him, this famous supernatural being, not with effusiveness, but in a manner in which he intended to convey profound gratitude.

When they were once more in the car (Satters had beamed with relief as they came down the flagged path), the Bailiff said, "When he spoke to me just now, in our language, he told me how a Lieutenant-General, showing a great deal of side, had turned up a week before. He only exchanged a few words with him and then sent him in to the surgeon, who cut all his fingers off at the knuckle. He was brought in to see him three days later, fingerless. All his side had gone!—You see, Pullman, he looks at men and their fingers in a very different way from you. He has a poor appreciation of the material you would say. His heart is of gold, but it is so *large*."

"And a finger is so small, is that what you mean?"

Pullman looked at the now piteous face of the great dignitary of the city from which they had taken flight.

## V

"Et b'en voilà, M'sieur *Poul*-man, notre boîte n'est pas luxueuse. Il n'y a pas de punaises, M'sieur Poul-man, il n'y a pas de bêtes. La luxe vous ne trouverez pas chez nous, C'est entendu. Mais cuisine française—et bien cuisinée—se trouve en bas, et si la cuisine ne vous plaît pas vous n'avez qu'aller en face, où il se trouve un Bar, qui n'est pas mal."—Such was the welcome they received from Mark, the man who had been a chef for the officers in a crack police regiment, recuited in the neighbouring industrial city, whose population was quite different in character from the people of Matapolis. These officers were all obliged to learn French, and apparently had also developed a taste for French cooking. Such were the origins of Mark, the only free and smiling man in this community whom, so far, Pullman had encountered. Mark possessed a geniality which he considered authentic: and he was well content in this sullen, frozen city, to find himself handed over to a man of flesh and blood, human after the manner of Europe.

It was now three days since the visit to Sammael, and he had had time to digest the impression he had registered on that occasion. First, there was the sensation of being in contact, within a yard or two, of a spirit only second to God. This incarnation of Evil rocked a child in his arms. He had shuddered as he thought that this was the Morning Star, he had held his breath as he realised that this creature was far more terrible than a man-eating tiger, and that he was passing an examination, the result of which would be decisive. It meant nothing at all that his own reaction to the appearance of Sammael, to the personality, had been favourable; less than nothing. Talking to him was like conversing with a most urbane boa-constrictor, who wished to be regarded as a polished gentleman, whose conversation was always turning to how he had squeezed someone the day before. And ultimately, at the basis not only of his mind but of his nature, was his hatred of the human race.

Pullman was now absolutely in the power of this violent creature. Was this a situation in which it would be justified to feel anything but the closeness of a danger of the most absolute kind?

No idea of this was communicated to his young follower. On the other hand, Satters remained profoundly uneasy, and, at intervals, pressed him with questions. Why was this such a shabby old place, why was it so unlike the Phanuel Hotel, and so on and so forth. When Pullman answered that this was a very different place, Satters pestered him as to whether Third City had been destroyed? When he said he did not know, that no one had mentioned it, Satters was incredulous.

For the first time since his adolescence, Pullman prayed. They had separate rooms. The first night in the hotel, as he lay in bed, unexpectedly he found himself with his hands covering his face, whispering a traditional supplication: he prayed for mercy and forgiveness, and for the intervention of God in the terrible ordeal in which he and his young friend found themselves. Satters, he insisted, had in no way shared in his sinfulness, indeed he was so simple that he was incapable of sin. He derived great comfort from his prayers, he slept, if not serenely, at least without mental shock. The next morning, it is true, he thought of what would be Sammael's reactions, could he have known about this. But he felt no alarm, he had been greatly fortified.

So they began to live in this new place, both uneasy, the one so much so that it was all he could do to make his domestic face retain its blank expression, the other childish and fretful. Since where they lived was the limit of the down-town district, and fifty yards away, the other side of a wide dusty road, was practically the desert, at night it was fresh, if not chilly. Every evening they made their way downstairs after dinner, and sat with Mark in the kitchen, and drank a grog or two. Mark was usually alone, or, if someone else was there, Mark did not neglect them. Pullman felt that this man liked speaking French—speaking a language which none of those by whom he was surrounded knew. He informed Pullman that he did not come from this city, but from one considerably larger, some three hundred miles away.

Because of their widely different occupations (this other place was purely industrial) their mentality was altogether different, and the inmates of that much gayer and more "normal" place considered themselves in every way superior to the punishment-minded citizens of Matapolis.

Even the police force in that city was distinct in character

from that of its neighbour; and Mark, who had enlisted in a crack police regiment of his native city, was very conscious, living where he did, of the dissimilarity between that exquisite body and the rougher, coarser regiments of the home of punishment.

Man undisciplined and in the rough was not at all popular with the angelic overlords. They would have had every man in uniform if there had been no objection to this: but they thought it was better not to make uniformed man too cheap. They preferred to have a uniformed, disciplined buffer between the Yahoo and themselves. So there were far more police regiments than were strictly necessary, but still the majority were outside this kind of élite.

Mark had spent almost half his life in his present unsympathetic milieu working as a chef. He liked talking about the officers, with whom his duties in the mess had brought him in contact. Since they generally spoke French he had learned it, especially as half the other chefs were Frenchmen, who had begun as Sinners, but been spared because of their ability to cook. Even in the angel households these French chefs were found; but Sammael rather frowned on this, as it savoured of indulgence, and it was better to deny oneself these delicious sauces. *Sauce Hollandaise* to him smelt of sin. There was one of the great angels who was a close friend of his, and who had had a French chef: the lord Sammael always chaffed him about it. "You will become gross. In the end you will waddle!" he would say. "You will become like Man!"

Their fourth evening in their new quarters, Mark said to Pullman that he should have a stroll through the city, and Satters also. But he would take *him* first, and Satters a day or two later. To have *two* strangers with him would attract too much attention. Pullman had better wear an old jacket of his—he was too smartly dressed. He could pass him off as a colleague—a French chef. Pullman agreed, and said he thought that he could pass himself off as a Frenchman from Guernsey. There was only one English-speaking person in the city: he was an Australian. This man was said to be sinful; but, after he had lost both his ears, he had been allowed to escape, because of his knowledge of sheep farming. He was employed by the principal butcher in town. He was a good driver, too, and was sent by the butcher to make a round of the farms.

When free he was to be found in a pool-room or café. Mark said he would introduce Satters to this Sinful Digger, if he could find him. Satters was looking forward to meeting the Digger; for he believed the time might come when they would have to find work, and he could see himself being taken on by this Briton from Down Under, perhaps to drive him around the farms, if he were suffering from a hangover.

Watched despondently by Satters, Pullman left, in the company of Mark, the following day after lunch. They walked down to where the city ended, still observed from the apartment window by Satters. They then found themselves in the dusty road, which curved around the limits of the city, as if built there to hold it in, and designed to mark the place beyond which no further expansion was to occur.

Mark explained that this road connected the place of punishment and the sheds where new batches of Sinners arrived, were paraded, and marched, escorted by armed police, to the place of punishment. As he was explaining this he looked backwards, and cried, "Tiens! La violà qui arrive, la convoie." He suggested that they walk in the opposite direction to start with: it would no doubt be interesting to Mr Pullman to see a typical group of Sinners.

Reversing their direction, in about five minutes they met the procession. The Sinners were four abreast, and all the way down, upon either side, were guards with rifles slung over their shoulders.

The Sinners belonged almost exclusively to the European and American bourgeoisie, and were of various European nationalities. Both men and women were hatless, and of an over-all unwashed, unshaven, creased and dusty appearance.

The knowledge of what awaited these people horrified Pullman, but the expression of their faces showed that they were quite unprepared for what was in store for them, especially the women. Some were attempting to maintain as much dignity as possible. Pullman noticed one woman, a handsome Sinner somewhere in the thirties. She was attempting by means of an extremely disdainful expression—which had rather the effect that she smelt something disagreeable—to separate herself from those around her. She was tall, dressed in black, with large hips, and she minced along in a manner suggestive of social elevation. However, the police-guard who

marched a yard or two behind her disapproved of this conceitedly mincing figure, and just before Mark and Pullman came level with her he sprang forward and levelled a violent kick at her elegantly moving buttocks. This was accompanied by an eruption of hoary Semitic oaths; and immediately afterwards he kicked her again. On each occasion she rose into the air and made a graceful descent, withering the guard with a glance which took no effect upon his anatomy, leathery with the scorn of much jack-booted femininity. That she was not totally unprepared for what had happened, she proved by the way in which she resumed her haughty mince—almost gracefully accepting her violent levitation, and slipping into place again down below as if nothing had occurred, dancing forward with contemptuous indifference, with an ease that could only mean habit.

However, the guard was not satisfied. Shouting at her loudly, he loosed a third kick at the black undulating figure. A male Sinner, a face with angry eye, untidily-bristling red moustache, stocky, cheaply clad, a German, in the next row to the proud lady, seized the guard by the arm and shouted at him, in his harsh and guttural tongue, to behave himself or he, the Sinner, would kick *him*. Whereupon the guard dragged him out of the line of march, and, a revolver pressed against his back, marched him to the rear.

The guard's voice rose to a hysterical pitch. According to Mark's translation the words were to this effect: 'You placed yourself behind the high—stepper, did you, dog of a Sinner! I will take you where you cannot see her well-cut tailor's sex-trap—come along, step a little smarter or I will send a bullet into your bladder. Understand, Mr Sinner, those days are over! No more fat bottoms here—all that is over. In an hour or so from now I'll see to it that your anatomy loses all sensitiveness to sexual stimulus. Come along, step out!'

The Sinner was conscious of the gun in his back. He could not understand what the man was saying, but he did not like the sound of his voice, and he trotted along.

They passed another woman who was being similarly treated as a football, only with a more obscene directness. This was a French girl and she was screaming, her face in a grimace of agony, and her body doubled up. The guard, with an expression of bestial loathing, was preparing for another

booting. And then they came to a third woman, who was being struck with the rifle butt, and spat at by a gorilla of a guard.

"Women do not seem to be very popular here!" Pullman remarked.

"No," Mark agreed. "Now and then a Sinner is excused —goes free. But that is a man. If it came to his knowledge that a woman had been allowed to escape, the lord Sammael would decree the death of the guilty man responsible."

"Ah ha," was Pullman's non-committal comment.

Encouraged by Pullman's restraint, Mark continued. "When they reach the place of punishment, all the women are marched out, and all of suitable age are publicly assaulted, by any guard who wishes to. There is a stretch of grass just there for that purpose. While this is going on a voice shouts into a megaphone, 'After this you will go to a surgeon, who will obliterate sex for you.' Most of them are marched off to the operating table, from the grass, hot from their last erotic exercise."

"Ah," said Pullman. "Ahum."

Not considering these sounds as particularly censorious, Mark was encouraged to fill out his informative sketch.

"Yes," he said, "Yes. What the lord Sammael says is that the female cockroach, when pursued, drops its seedbag. Its pursuer continues to follow it, neglecting the smaller object, the seed-bag. It is the latter that is the more important. With the female Sinner the same problem is involved. Cut out the means she has of producing more Sinners."

"A very necessary precaution," Pullman observed—"though anatomically a little incorrect."

"I am glad you look at it in that way, sir," said Mark, with obvious relief.

They had turned off the main road, and were now making for the town in a different direction from what had been planned, at a point higher up.

"This way," Mark said, "will take us through a rather picturesque backwater."

In a moment they were passing through a winding street of small shops. These were after the Eastern manner, little businesses being carried on in full view, either through openings in the street wall, or through glazed windows.

"This is rather curious," said Pullman, as he stopped in front of a largish shop. "This is not horsehair, is it?"

"No," Mark answered, "not horse's. That is the hair of Sinners. This man purchases this hair from the place of Punishment. Some of the females have very fine hair. In most cases it is cut off right away, and in any case their heads are shaved when they die. That does not take long. Some of the younger men have a good thatch. There"—he pointed to some packets of black hair, tied with string—"that is probably an Italian's crop. It is very useful for pincushions, or for padding of clothes; although these short, strong hairs are apt to get adrift in one of the cheaper suits, and give you a bad prick."

"Indeed?" Pullman showed a curious interest.

"Oh yes," said Mark. "I have had a stiff black hair like that come through the lining of the jacket, and prick me below the armpit."

"Ha!" said Pullman. Mark looked at him. But his face showed nothing but polite curiosity. A man and a woman were busily at work with small upholsteries, one a padded silken box, another apparently with handkerchief sachets.

A little higher up the street they came upon a shop that displayed some sheets of tobacco. One appeared to be quite a large sheet.

"What are these?" Pullman inquired.

"That is, again, the product of the Sinners. These are preserved shins. Simmers are usually skinned at death (some are skinned pretty completely alive). These are sold to the factories usually, and are useful in all kinds of manufactures. You'd laugh, Mr Pullman, if you knew what they were used for. It's wonderful what they do with the Sinners. They pull all their nails out, for instance, and they are of the greatest use to the manufacturer. And the teeth—poor devils, you might say. But at least they end their life more usefully than they lived it."

"Yes. A bad hat provides the trimmings for a luxury article."

"That is how it works out."

They progressed through this great backwater. There were chessmen, which interested Pullman. They entered the shop: the shopkeeper said that they were the work of a Sinner. As they cost the equivalent of a few shillings only, Pullman bought them. The shopman looked at him with suspicion. Few

people in this city would pay even a penny for these meaningless little objects. He looked at him as if he had an assegai for sale, and a negro had entered the shop and asked the price.

They soon reached a part of the town of more pretentious tone: they passed several tennis-courts, in which young men and women were playing. The feminine side of the party aroused Pullman's curiosity. He thought that if they had been in the Sinners' procession they would have failed to excite the guards. If facially deficient, and wanting in all the usual arts, these girls rushed about, and, as their short white skirts flew up, they revealed white thighs—which suggested that love took the same course as elsewhere.

"I compare these happy young women," Pullman expatiated, "who spring about, exposing the private areas of their legs, with the ill-starred ladies in the procession of Sinners, blows rained upon their posteriors by the zealous guards. Are these young ladies' seed-sacks out of reach of the Punishment Services? Or, should they transgress in the way that it is so easy for these creatures to do, are they marched off to the place of punishment—their buttocks blackened by the jack-boots of the guards on the way?"

These sententious words, uttered with a measured gravity, were the first remark made by his guest since their departure from the hotel, and Mark was taken aback. For a moment they walked in silence.

"If anyone sins here, and is denounced," Mark said at last, "he is punished. The people playing tennis were the young men and women from the University. I have never heard of any young lady at the University sinning. Among the better classes it is so rare a thing to hear of sinfulness that one may say that there is no sin. There is the under mass, but they live animal-like lives. Sin there is of course among that brutal herd, but no one considers them worthy of notice."

Pullman looked with admiration at Mark, and said, "Thank you, that is a very clear statement."

They were now approaching busier streets—larger and better-stocked shops, more European in appearance—more people. Hearing them speaking a foreign language, the passers-by stared aggressively at them.

"Nearly all these people," Mark pointed out, "work, or have

at some time worked in the Punishment Service. If you came down here by yourself they would most likely regard you as a Sinner who had somehow escaped, and was making a dash for freedom. They would hold you, and telephone for the police. The police are not very intelligent on the whole—you would have a pretty disagreeable time, *mon cher.*"

Pullman thanked him for warning him, and said it was certainly not his intention to go gallivanting about unaccompanied in this dangerous city. In order to avoid attracting attention Mark lowered his voice. But this only caused still more suspicion. Three men passed them. Pullman caught the eye of the one in the middle, and the eye seemed to enlarge and was filled with something like disagreeable surprise. Later, these men passed them again, and immediately afterwards Mark wheeled about. He was being interrogated by the man into whose eye Pullman had gazed.

The interrogation continued, but Mark appeared quite collected. He drew out of his inner pocket a printed form, in a passe-partout and covered with cellophane. But that did not appear to terminate the discussion. Mark turned to him and said, "Ce monsieur est un sergent de police. Nous en avons pour peutêtre dix minutes. C'est emmerdant."

Pullman smiled and answered: "C'est la vie, c'est la merde."

The police sergeant wanted to know what Pullman's answer meant Mark. Promptly translated, "C'est la vie, c'est la merde." This appeared to annoy the sergeant a great deal.

A crowd collected, and there was someone—noticeably well-heeled—who pressed forward and spoke to Mark. After that he turned to the police sergeant, and, with a great air of authority, spoke for a minute or two. This had a magical effect. The sergeant saluted, offered Mark his hand in the most affable manner, and after that, saluting again, turned on his heel, and with his two friends strode away.

Thereupon, Mark and the deity who had come to their rescue, accompanied by Pullman, made their way down the street—some members of the crowd following at a respectful distance. Mark explained to his protégé that this gentleman was a major in a crack regiment, who had known him for a long time—indeed, he had cooked all this gentleman's meals when he was a young officer.

"Je suis enchanté, monsieur, d'avoir pu jouer la rôle de

sauveur!" the severely spruce, erect, and military looking gentleman said to Pullman.

He and Mark, in their own language, conversed with eagerness for some minutes, and then they reached what was a main street of some kind. They stopped, and their rescuer handed a card to Mark. Then he turned to Pullman, and said, "What a pity it is that we are in so extraordinary a place. We would go and refresh ourselves in some bar, but, you know, it is impossible to speak French publicly here without attracting a crowd. But it is that they think you must be a couple of escaped Sinners. It is a pity we have so much to do with sin!"

When they had parted from the witty and well-heeled major they were by themselves again, still a few of the inquisitive loitering near. His late experience had apparently robbed Mark of his perfect self-assurance.

"Should we get in another entanglement no Major Staffo will drop from the sky to rescue us. What I think I shall do is to take a taxi-cab, take you up to the centre of the city, and then we will go home."

They were not long in securing a cab, and their sightseeing tour began. The centre of Matapolis was not the heart of a city, but an unlively mathematical middle. The traffic gave it more life than Third City, but the stores had been designed by architects who had no economic margin for style or with which to impress. It was a white city—a dirty white, thought Pullman. One of the main objects of the superior architect was to give things as much as possible a European look. The result was a garish mixture of the Orient and the worst taste of Western cities.

It had not a busy appearance. Most of the citizens were, of course, just outside the city, punishing people for their sins; a restricted number of drab women were crawling in and out of the shops to purchase a scallop or a frill, to attract the sinful eye of their inquisitional mate, or some other male. But there was no elasticity in these little figures.

"Içi se trouve le quartier général de la mode, les belles dames s'y précipitent pour se parer des rêves de Dior." But Pullman had a good opportunity of seeing the beautiful shoppers at close range, and he was bound to admit that it was not the reveries of Dior which undulated before his eyes.

Reducing his voice to a saponaceous growl, Mark had employed the language of Racine; the cabman's head shot around and a fierce little eye fixed itself upon him. What a spying, lying, thieving head it was to be sure. Pullman asked himself if he had seen any face in the course of their expedition, including the tennis players, which was not the face of a rat or a weasel—he had never seen so low a type of face, or women who were so ugly. He felt that a beautiful woman would be as much exposed to mistrust and hatred as a person, like himself, speaking a language with which the inhabitants were unfamiliar.

When they reached the hotel they went at once to the kitchen to give themselves a drink. But Satters had been at the window, and in a few minutes they heard the heavy feet of the fag upon the stairs some distance away.

"A small man's drink for Mr Satterthwaite!" called Pullman—and at the words the small man entered.

"What was it like, Pulley!" Satters said in an awed whisper. "I stopped in the window, you know, and I saw people being marched along, and a soldier kicking the women. I saw you too, Pulley, watching; I expected you to . . . well . . ."

"To kick the guard! I leave all the chivalry to you. Why didn't you jump out of the window, and rush to the rescue of the sinful lady?"

Mark brought the three drinks, and, after a drink or two, he began explaining this and that to Pullman.

"There is no one I should have been so glad to see," he said, "no one. Major Staffo is, in the first place, a gentleman, and the prison-police he appreciates at their true and proper worth, which is zero. That sergeant was of the prison-service—that was why he was so difficult to shake off. When the major put in an appearance he knew at once that he was dealing with someone with whom it was not safe to trifle. He let go straight away. For two pins the major would have taken him by the tie and marched him to the nearest post. A major of the fifth regiment of police, recruited in the city I come from, is a different sort of man altogether from a prison-major. Why, for two pins I would have marched him to the nearest post myself!—After that we were being tailed by a couple of men who had been looking-on. As soon as the major had left us they would have begun to make trouble. They

would have expected to collect some money.—The city is full of rats. Did you see how that taxi-driver looked around when he heard us speaking French? When Mr Satterthwaite and I take a walk I shall go prepared. In any case we shall not be speaking French. We shall be a silent pair, I shall pretend that he is a mute."

His cool and collected exterior, when he had been stopped, had evidently been a bluff. Mark had been very uneasy, it was clear.

## VI

PULLMAN WAS COMING OUT of his bedroom. "If I am to be presentable tomorrow morning," he announced, "I must have a fresh packet of razor blades. I must go down and see Mark at once." He stood still. "What is that?"

There was the sound, in the street without, of a loud horn. Three insistent blasts were heard.

"I will go down and find out, Pulley." Thereupon, with hideous fracas, Satters began hurling himself down the stairs; Pullman took his hat, and followed him at a leisurely pace. Meanwhile the three blasts were repeated. Then Satters' voice roared up from below.

"Pulley, it's a great big car, it's very swish, Pulley. It's about to drive off; shall I stop it? No, it isn't. Here comes a bloke."

As Pullman arrived in the hall, Satters had just received, from a uniformed man, a large sealed letter, which he now passed on, and Pullman lost no time in opening it.

"Would you like a short ride in the country? Sending car to fetch you. If otherwise engaged, please tell chauffeur.—Just shake your head. Yrs sincerely, Sammael."

Satters need have no alarm, Pullman told him: he would be away for an hour or so at most. Then he went down rapidly, and entered the waiting car. There was no one in the car except a chauffeur who, without any recognition, put the automobile in movement as soon as he was seated. It was as if Pullman's posterior, in pressing the cushion of the seat, automatically started the machine.

The majestic vehicle moved along to the road upon which Mark and he had watched the procession of Sinners, turned to the right, and ran along it for several miles. They then reached a place with a great deal of movement—the place of punishment. There was a mountain at one side. The car drew up at the entrance to a large building across the road. Several men were waiting; two of them ran back into the door, and shortly appeared leading a woman, protesting. They pushed her inside the car, and chained her wrists to an iron ring. They then

sprang back, for they heard a quick step. The lord Sammael entered the car, and Pullman removed his hat.

"Good morning," said Sammael, as he sat down. The door clicked. A figure mounted beside the chauffeur, and the car moved away. "I am afraid, Pullman, that this is a rather unsavoury fellow-passenger for you, but it is a little job I sometimes take on, for a certain reason."

A groan came from the woman. "Where are you taking me, sir?" she asked in French. "Why am I chained up like this? I wish for an immediate explanation! You understand, sir!"

The woman could speak no language but French, it appeared; when they conversed in English she listened querulously, but there was no evidence that she understood anything.

"To travel in the company of this woman is extremely disagreeable. I must have these people transported in another car; I don't see why I should use mine."

He leaned towards the woman and said sharply, "Listen, Madame. If, *chemin faisant,* you force your personality upon our attention, you will be silenced. I do not enjoy the sound of your voice."

"And how about me? Do you suppose I enjoy *yours?* Do you suppose your personality is agreeable to *me*?"

The lord Sammael tapped upon the window behind the chauffeur, and the car came to a halt. The man sitting beside the chauffeur sprang out, and the door opened where the woman lay. Pullman saw a hypodermic syringe in the man's hand. An indignant scream came from the woman. The man was brutally excavating the lower female garments.

"Listen, listen . . . what is this! You allow yourself to . . .!"

A section of bottom was laid bare, then was obscured by coarse hands. This was followed by a shriek of pain as the needle was plunged into her flesh.

"This is abominable! What a way to treat a woman . . . It is unheard of . . . It is ignoble!" But the voice weakened, and the next minute she fell in a heap on the floor, her arms in the air, her wrists still attached to the ring. The car proceeded on its way.

"Her voice is redolent of the unreal life lived by the French bourgeoisie," said Sammael. "But she is now happily asleep. Let us have a look at the landscape," said he, turning his

attention to the wild scene without. "There"—he pointed through the window beside Pullman—"is the beginning of the country where we used to operate, four or five hundred years ago."

Pullman saw a valley of volcanic rock opening up, of the utmost savagery. There was no building of any kind, or any cultivation. Matapolis was a walled city on this side, and the inhabitants never ventured outside the walls.

"It was down into this valley that we used to drive the Sinners. It bore no resemblance to Dante's literary composition. Plenty of bonfires were kindled for the wicked, but the fires were not so concentrated as they are today."

Pullman saw, in his mind's eye, the mediaeval scene. There was a long stream of miserable sinners, some of them beating their breasts, some praying. Their costumes came out of the museums where Pullman had studied them, or out of albums of costumes, or old history books. Coloured designs of the Canterbury Pilgrims mingled with the rest, hooded apprentices and shaven monks, and women like Christmas trees. It was a rushing multitude of mediaeval nobodies, with staring eyes and chattering teeth, urged on by demons with pricking pitchforks, dressed in red, with reddened faces, jumping and screaming at the heels of the condemned.

A ragged cliff stood behind this torrent of the damned, among its rocks were contorted nudes, both white and red, to identify them either as miserable sinners, or members of the infernal staff. At the extremity of the cliff a Sinner attempted to save himself by fighting off a demon, who kept slashing him with a butcher's knife. But another naked figure was writhing through the air, halfway down to the leaping flames below. In the valley flames were being kindled everywhere by dozens of horned and tailed supers. These busy performers jumped up and down, grimacing upwards at those about to be tossed down from the rocks, by their costume and their gestures complying as far as possible with horror stories originating in mundane monasteries.

The debunking by Sammael of those distant days had painted in his vivid imagination a period piece, Hell in full swing; but great as his desire was to please the growling creature at his side, Pullman could not help wishing he could observe this scene at an off moment, and watch the staff

sitting about and chatting, spinning yarns and rolling on the rocks with laughter.

Nevertheless, he accepted entirely the scornful rejection of the traditional picture. It never occurred to him to doubt the historic arch-demon with whom he was visiting the legendary landscape.

As the car took them a little farther along, they passed the mouth of a ravine.

"Down there," Sammael told him with a gentle grimace, "was our famous 'lake of blood'. The blood, of course, was some earth we found, which we mixed with water, and red paint, to improve the rocks which protruded from it here and there.—We really did make our valley a rather unpleasant place."

As he gazed out of the window, Pullman thought that it still would repel the sensitive.

Soon they emerged into wider perspectives. There were ravines on ravines, brick-red cliffs, and mountains which rose much higher in the distance.

"Wait a little, and it will become uncommonly fierce-looking."

"It is already quite uncivilized enough—to satisfy the Hollywood producer," Pullman said.

"We reach something beyond the powers of Hollywood before very long."

Pullman uttered an "Aha!", and Sammael smiled—a civilized smile. Pullman was asked to report on his adventures, if he had any.

Briefly he recounted their attempt to view the city, the police sergeant's challenge, the gathering of a crowd, the appearance of the Major. Sammael was very interested.

"The little rats! They will not allow a man—two men—to walk around the streets. It is not zeal. They do not care whether a person is a Sinner or the reverse. They are merely thirsty for blood—they are greedy for excitement. They have no more principles than a minor bird of prey."

He asked the name of the Major, and when Pullman named him, he exclaimed, "Oh, Staffo—of the Fifth Regiment! A wonderfully good officer! You were indeed lucky to come across him. I shall write him a note. But Mark, on his own, is quite able to extricate you from such an embarrassing situation.

The Sergeant who stopped you belonged to the Punishment Service I expect. Mark could put him in his place quite easily. They are of use to me in a Punishment Cell; they do my dirty work. But Mark is a match for ten of them."

Pullman made no comment, except to say that Mark was a splendid fellow, and that he was very happy in this hotel which the lord Sammael had been so kind as to put at their disposal. Upon this, Sammael told him that he believed he was on the track of a job for him and his young friend—nothing very much, but it would do for a start. Pullman was profoundly relieved; for to be living the life of a gentleman of independent means *here* was impracticable, and anyway it would involve never going outside one's front door—living as if one were a member of some proscribed community.

The sort of whimpering noise a dog makes in its sleep came from the floor, and the woman also faintly burped. But there was no other sign of life. Sammael looked out of the window, stretching his neck to see as far as possible ahead.

"She will have to wake up soon. Perhaps ten minutes."

Suddenly the woman was betrayed into a nasty flatulence. Though muffled, it was quite loud.

"Disgusting bitch!" almost hissed Sammael. "That I should have to transport this cattle about!"

"Could not one of the Punishment Staff do the job?" Pullman ventured to ask.

Sammael shook his head. "No," he answered. "This one is *pretty*." The disgust and distaste with which he uttered this word profoundly impressed his listener: the mad puritan did not attempt to conceal the extent of his bias. "The difficulty is that almost whoever you might send would fornicate with her on the way. It is not even certain that finally he would do what he had been told to do: He might hide her, he might find some way of keeping her for himself. The only safe procedure seems to be, in the case of attractive females, for me or some responsible person to take them. I strongly object to having to do this. But so long as one takes any part in these disgusting proceedings one likes to see them properly carried out." He turned towards Pullman. "I am long past taking any interest in this wholesale punishment. It is an efficient service in most ways. I maintain an excellent 'Hell'—which is my function. It is only when Sex raises its ugly head that the proper carrying

out of the service has to be watched. And that, as I see it, is the most important part of it."

He said this, without heat, coldly, and one might say indolently.

The footman opened a small window, and said something, looking away. Sammael uttered two words in reply, the car stopped, and the footman moved quickly around. Once more the hypodermic syringe was in evidence. On this occasion he rolled up the woman's sleeve, and his syringe entered the flesh easily.

He returned to his seat beside the chauffeur, and the car started moving again. The figure of the woman remained inert for some minutes, then her eyes opened, and fixed themselves upon Sammael.

"Ah there you are!" she said listlessly. "In a word, you are the Devil—just the Devil!" she said. She crossed herself. Sammael turned away. "Answer me—where are you taking me to? Terrible man, I am to be offered to the wild animals, is not that true, is not that where you are taking me? Spirit of the Pit! Evil One! How hatefully ugly you are, like everyone who breathes corruption as you do, horrible man. Are you not ashamed of being so vile, man who works in something which is a thousand times dirtier than the sewers! Crapulous individual, who lies in the dung of the world because you know of nothing softer or sweeter-smelling! You believe that you are a handsome man—que vous avez la tête belle—don't you, fungus? Yours is a beast's head, and not a man's. You are an animal —not one of the high animals, but a most ill-favoured monster. Ugh! Your face is not human as you believe it to be—not human as is this person's here, for instance."

She pointed at Pullman, who smiled superciliously, glancing at Sammael.

She now began addressing Pullman. "As for you, sir, you have that little smile of yours because you are afraid. Yes, yes. You are afraid of this terrible monster who takes human form but is none the less terrifying for that. But you are intelligent, you see what is underneath. You see the terrifying monster —you are not deceived by the face like that of a man. Ah yes, like myself, you are human, you have *reason* to tremble—what else could you do but smile scornfully to order! You do not want to be in my shoes, my poor little fellow. The implacable

*merde* you divine, the merciless excrement which serves him for blood!"

The woman crossed herself, to write finis to her diatribe.

"Woman!" said sternly the lord Sammael. "It would be far more logical if you crossed yourself lower down, over your sex."

The car slowly drew up, and there was a wild stampede outside, and a goatish grimace of ineffable self-satisfied lubricity—a kind of quiet, conceited, knowing subtlety always seen in profile, covered with silken hair, appeared for a flash at the window beside which Sammael sat, and violently vanished. This was a very different place to meet these beasts than in a well-guarded Piazza in Third City. Pullman was suddenly overwhelmed with horror, as he thought of the fate of the woman at his feet, who crouched there apparently in prayer.

"She is not actually thrown to those animals, is she?" he exclaimed in spite of himself. "It is just to scare her, is it not?"

"The best way to answer that question is like this," said Sammael, seizing the cowering woman, he flung her over to his side of the car. "Pitié! Pitié!" she screamed.

"Autant de pitié, Madame," Sammael answered sternly, "que vous avez montré á Gabriel."

He flung the door open, getting bitten in the hand by one of the ravening beasts. There burst into the car the fearful stench, there was a scarlet flash of sexual monstrosity, the whining and snorting of a score of faces—the beasts leaping on one another's backs, so that several appeared to be about to spring on to the roof of the car.—Scores of sinewy arms terminating in claws shot into the car, and snatched the woman out of it.

There was her body, shoulder-high, for the fraction of a second, in the midst of the stinking pack—the sickening odour increasing in intensity. Just for that fractional speck of time a dozen claws could be seen defiling her person. The most terrible scream Pullman had ever heard filled aurally that speck of time. The car gathered speed, the door was violently closed, and that was that. The silence was tremendous and Pullman was alone—more alone than he had ever been with anyone in his life—with the lord Sammael.

Sammael sat, spitting blood into a white handkerchief, after sucking the gash in his hand.

Pullman was trembling: the suddenness of the dénouement, and the shocking momentary vision of ferocity had deeply shaken him. The woman's denunciation of Sammael immediately before the climax had affected him in a way he had to be very careful not to reveal. His sympathy for the woman grew and subterraneously developed; and when he *saw* (with unexpected suddenness) the unsurpassable horror of her punishment he started trembling as in response to horror, because of the violent conflict in his psyche. He was on the verge of an outburst. The woman, praying and crossing herself, was doing what he ought to have been doing. She was defying the superhuman strength of the infernal power. The same situation began to develop as the conflict in Third City when the time came when he ought to have severed his connection with that *monstre gai*. Here it was a new kind of monster—and there was no alternative in a shorter or longer time, except death.—He felt, if he played along with this monster until the end, that then a third and last monster ought to make his appearance; and with him there would be no choice (such as Mark or some "job"), but there could be in *that* situation, No. 3, nothing but immediate death, identical with that suffered by the woman, but roaring and stinking. He would be a different kind of monster again. He would look at you, and you would die. His heart would be blacker than Satan, his magic more deadly than Medusa.

So he was in an evil dream, he was stunned and he trembled. He asked, his voice shaken, "Is the bite in your hand . . .?"

"Yes, it is," Sammael answered smoothly. "Very. But I am going to the Clinic and they will perfectly bathe me in penicillin." He looked up softly from the gash made by the animal, and smiled, as it were mockingly, at the pale and trembling figure in the other corner of the car. "You are shocked, Pullman, because of the horrible fate allotted to the woman. Had you perused the dossier as I did, did you know how callous she was when alive, how she broke the heart of her young husband Gabriel, and, it was believed, infected her third husband with the King's Evil, you would feel differently. She was as bad a woman as you could find anywhere. You saw her crossing herself and supplicating God. Well, it would have

been no use her appealing to any judge, competent to try her. The Pope has several times refused her absolution."

"I see, I see," said Pullman.

The lord Sammael looked up quizzically, a cold smile in the depth of his eyes.

Pullman saw the smile, and said (with an answering smile): "Yes. I *see*. I *see*. I have a way of speaking adapted for commune with the unintelligent. Of men, ninety per cent are that. I am the one per cent who is (for a man) intelligent. You must, sir, be indulgent—first, because I am only a man: and in the second place, because I have always lived with men, poorer in intellect than myself."

Sammael again smiled, but in the warmer surface of his eye.

"I am aware that you forget that you are speaking to the Devil. Treat me always as a man: I shall like that best."

Pullman was looking out of the window at his side, more than formerly he had done, and noticed a number of bones on the verge or near it. Some were even in the road.

"There are many bones," he said, as he looked out.

"Quite a few," Sammael replied, glancing negligently out of the window, his accent dry and Satanaelic.

"All female ossatures?" Pullman quietly surmised.

"I suppose so. As you may have realized, the beasts soon kill the women, they are so violent. As they fornicate, they *eat*. They bite mouthfuls out of them, regardless of the fact that, with the human, death is found a very short distance beneath the surface."

Pullman kept his eyes lowered; he thought of the woman, there at his feet, not hours, but minutes ago, and it was all he could do not to vomit. He fought the threatened emission as hard as any young man at his first drinking party, but for an extremely different motive. He discouraged the vomit sternly. He *must not* be sick.

"About a year ago," Sammael told him easily, "we got a lot of bad daughters of Eve at once. There is an extremely large cave, twenty miles farther inland. We took a batch of about a hundred there. We lighted it with electricity, and rounded up about two hundred of the animals. We had plenty of troops at hand, with machine-guns trained upon the entrance of the cave. I did not go myself, but my secretary

was there and he gave me a vivid description—it was so vivid that I felt I could hear and smell as he was telling me every detail of the ferocious scene. The towering cavern was malodorous to a degree, and the characteristic stench of these filthy animals was intensified during the orgasm. When the women were first released among them, the noise was horrifying. To cite the screams of terror of the women in no way conveys the vocal tempest which broke loose. Voices of every calibre and every kind split and rent the air in this maddening uproar.

"Some of the voices obviously believed it was possible to save themselves if only they made noise enough, which is the teaching of the earth. Other women had, it was obvious, a truer appreciation of their position; they wept, some loudly, some quietly. Some roared like bulls or crazy cows, or snarled in preparation to do combat with the animals. Some were so intensely terrified that they were actually demented. The animals, so disgustingly numerous, could be heard mainly as a kind of universal whinny, and later, eating and guzzling sounds."

"How fearful," Pullman said.

"I have a recording of it, a number of discs. If you like, I will let you hear it."

"I wish you would," Pullman said firmly.

"It is difficult," Sammael observed, "to describe the sound made by animals. What they do is so much more impressive than what they say. An analysis of the nature of this breed reveals a frivolous and profoundly irresponsible character. Consider the expression of their faces. There is a perpetual smile and a mischievously darting or provoking sleepy slit-eye. At the same time, they dance, pirouette, leap about incessantly—seemingly an expression of high-spirits, purposeless and mischievous at once. They will eat a woman—eat all the flesh of her arms away, eat off her breasts as a piece of fun. When a couple of them have killed a woman, you will see them tripping away like a couple of schoolgirls released from school, chattering and swinging their satchels. The tragic does not exist for them: they are the most irresponsible creatures I know—but are intensely lecherous, which is, to their eyes, the central fact of life. After having satisfied their libido, they twinkle all over. The dance merrily, skip and twinkle."

"Do they fight?" Pullman inquired.

"Ah yes, that is the exception, they then are serious. They scratch each other's eyes out, relieving nature, always an accompaniment of a duel. All the time, as they are fighting, they blackguard one another, shrilly and hysterically. They will fight all over a mountain, all day. At the end of it, one is more dead than alive. If rescued, he weeps like a child—because he was not able to bite the other's nose off, or had not been able to finish the victor.—There was once a sort of Hercules among them —*he* was serious. If they danced about *too* facetiously and irresponsibly, he would go after them and kill one or both of them. They were all very afraid of him—and so were we. But *he* was the only rational one I have ever encountered."

"How did he die?" Pullman wanted to know.

"He was run over by a truck. But he was trying to hold it up: it was full of melons, of which Jobo was particularly fond."

The horror of this life was quite secondary: Sammael discussed one thing and another, without any preference for the super-dramatics.

The origin of these extraordinary animals was a question which darted about in Pullman's brain. "You spoke of the *breed* of these animals just now. What is their *breed* exactly?" Pullman inquired.

"They are half goat and half man—or perhaps it would be better to say three-quarters goat and one quarter man," Sammael answered. "The goats, of which there are still plenty in these mountains, are a very large animal, whose face closely resembles that of the mixed breed, only its expression is far less complicated. It took a long time to interbreed them up to their present perfection of beastliness."

The car had turned round and was now moving rather quickly on the home run.

"You have stood up very well to this ordeal." The lord Sammael smiled in a friendly way.

"You do regard it as an ordeal?" inquired Pullman sedately.

"You must regard me as an out-and-out brute," and the lord of Hell made a self-amused grimace. "I really am much less of a brute than I appear. Those animals fill me with horror, they cause me such inexpressible disgust that it is as

much as I can do to go near them. But that is physical and visible, nasal and visual; and the Women-Sinners disgust me even more. I realize that that is a little obsession. But what can you expect of an angel!" he laughed. "The female of your species does really affect me as some people are affected by cats. If I could exterminate them I would. For the rest, I have never relished my job as executioner. As much as possible I have delegated it to others. On principle, I approve of punishing Man just for being Man: but I do not enjoy playing the *bourreau.* However, a century will see the end of all this. Christianity will not last much longer than that."

"I cannot understand how you can ever have taken it up," said Pullman softly, with a familiarity into which he felt he had been betrayed.

But Sammael did not seem to have any objection to the question, and answered at once, with great geniality. "Because of my abhorrence of Man, and of his abominable playmate, Woman."

There was a pause of a minute or two, and then Sammael continued. "But I am very tired of Man: and, in any case, he is acquiring a technological magic which may in the end equal us in resource. Nevertheless, it does not look as if he would ever develop sufficient intelligence to make use of it.—So we may see the end of him, even before he has discarded his Christianity. A physicist, a most tremendous Sinner, came in here the other day. He told me several things of a very novel kind. I took him out of reach of my Punishment Service at once. I shall, I think, make use of this atomic specialist." He yawned—at least Pullman thought it was a yawn. Then he added negligently, "Before I have done I may make an end of what men know as Heaven, and build a true one myself. Certain members of your kind will be able to help me in that task."

"Is the supernatural susceptible to atomic fission?" Pullman very faintly put the question.

"There is no such thing as the supernatural," Pullman was told. "That is one of the customary illusions."

An image, one of the utmost horror, assailed Pullman's eyes, burst itself into the virgin area upon which impressions intense and unintense daily imprint themselves. This horrible image, in two or three seconds, was there no more. They were passing

the place where the wretched Frenchwoman had been delivered to the grinning animals. She lay there, a raw and bleeding mass—even her face seemed to have been devoured. The arm had been laid bare at the top, and the bone was visible. One animal was on top of her, others crouched on either side, but perhaps most loathsome of all, was an animal's face turned towards the passing car with the usual inimitable smile of mischievous complicity, as if to say, "Ah, there you are, you fellows, as you see we are having a fine old time."

As Pullman was pondering this, the lord of all this part of the universe (whom he wished he had never seen) turned to him and said, "We have been returning the way we came. I did not draw your attention to it, but we passed Madame Carnot. She was already covered with blood. Two of the beasts were occupied in her punishment *à fond*. She must have died some time ago—women die with great facility. There is one who deserves all that she gets."

"Her dossier was abominable, you say," Pullman observed.

"Was that man-talk, or are we on a higher level?" Sammael's smile was friendly.

"Man-talk. There are some areas where man and angels say the same things."

"I see. I see," said the lord Sammael.

His glimpse of the closing scene in this hideous play had to be hurried away from the foreground of Pullman's consciousness and a mask drawn down over his face. He congratulated himself upon the effectiveness of the suppression. And then he became aware of one amiable and sleepy goatish profile nearer to him than such a countenance had ever been before—gliding up and down just beyond the glass of the car window. The disgusting urbanity of the face, the blood colouring the line of the mouth, and reaching, here and there, as far as the eye, its patient smiling restraint, as the animal ambled along beside the car, was politely expressive. "Any more?" it inquired, as it slid its eye sleepily into the car.

Sammael stood up, and took down from a rack above the window a sort of carbine. Then he closed the window a few inches on Pullman's side, and fired at the face. Then he closed the window, and replaced the little rifle in the rack.

"If not discouraged," he told Pullman, "those beasts will sometimes gallop along with one as far as the city—that one

would have been waiting, smiling, as I got out of the car at the hospital. It would have been killed by a sentry. It is our purpose to keep them as tame as possible, but we do not invite familiarity. On one occasion a band of them trotted up to the buildings over there, and, seeing a young woman doctor, they seized her and carried her off. They were pursued by the police. They killed all of them, and rescued the woman doctor—badly scratched and bitten."

"Ah," said Pullman.

"Yes. The police shoot them at sight; but they still hover around, and one even was discovered in the city."

"What happened to it?" Pullman asked.

"A man shot it. But we have a rampart now all around the settled area."

The car drew up in front of the hospital, and, before stepping out, Sammael said. "A horrible ride, I am afraid, but it is just as well that you should know how we all spend our time in this place. On another occasion we will drive out into the farm land. There are no horrors there—unless they happen to be killing a pig!" He laughed, nodded, and left the car.

## VII

FREE AT LAST to analyse the whole of this entire event from beginning to end, while the car carried him back to his lodging, he fired questions at himself. (1) What was the idea in asking him to assist at this bestial execution of a European woman? For he could not conceive of it as innocent in the way that the animals were innocent—murderous, stinking innocents. (2) Was it done in order to try him out, as a prospective punisher of Sinners? In that case, it might have been better not to conceal his repugnance.

But the question of questions, of course, was what was the nature of the relationship between himself (the poor, insignificant, human self) and this notorious super-human personage? Had this great immortal "taken a fancy to him"? Pullman jeered at himself—had he ever, for the fraction of a second, entertained such a notion as that?

It was easy for him to say what this relationship was *not,* but beyond that he could not even make a guess, for he had no record on which to base a supposition. It was a fact that he was talkative, and, in a way, that, were he man, would signify good will. But he was not a man: and there was no imaginable reason why he should feel good will to such as Pullman, or why he should offer to take him for excursions in the country.—His "good will" was a circumstance full of sinister import, much more than it was anything else. But it was almost as conceited to suppose that this great personage had sinister designs, as that he had friendly designs. To place with this, he certainly had some design (which likewise was undoubtedly conceited!).

The car arrived at his apartment, and there was no question that the more you scrutinised probabilities, the less impenetrably black and hopeless the weight of evidence appeared to be.

His own moral position, on the other hand, he thought, as he went up the stairs, could not have been lower. There was blood on his hands as truly as if he had physically assisted at the vilest kind of murder: and he arrived in front of Satters more confused than ever before.

It would have been extremely unfair to Satters to show

himself optimistic, to show a cheerful face; it would have been equally so to breathe pessimism.

"I have been sitting and writing a story, Pulley."

"A story?" Pullman laughed. "Who is the hero?"

"Me," Satters told him modestly, frowning down at the piles of large crabbed handwriting.

„Have you found out anything about yourself?"

"No. Ought I?" Satters looked surprised.

"No. I see the kind of writer you are. No." Pullman shook his head.

Relieved not to be scrutinised, after the usual manner of Satters, Pulhman sat down in the easy chair, and Satters drew up to a table near which he was sitting. Pullman felt that he must put this child's worst fears at rest—as he believed himself justified in doing.

"That is that," he began.

"Is it, Pulley? I thought it was, kind of, you know."

"We do not speak the same language. It is not as bad as you think. It is merely nothing certain, as yet. But as far as I know it will be all right. Some days must pass, though."

Satters drew his chair towards Pullman. "Pulley," he said, "the old Ba . . . the Bailiff, Pulley, has been here."

"Yes?" Pullman answered.

"He said to tell you that he is blamed a good deal by Satan for the conduct . . . *the conduct* of affairs, he said in Third City. He said this was unfair, Pulley."

"Ah. What else?"

"It was his advice, he said, Pulley, to find, if you possibly could, someone to take us back to Third City!—That's what I've been writing about. How we landed in Third City."

"It is easy to say, 'Do this' or 'Do that'," Pullman commented. "He did not tell you what *he* was proposing to do?"

"No, Pulley. He said something more. He told me to remember the words. He said, 'Say that the little elephant would be unable to help you!'" Satters read these words from a scrap of paper.

Pullman smiled. "I never supposed he would. It was obvious that the lord Sammael did not feel very warmly towards him."

Satters was silent, digesting this. "If he can't help us, Pulley, who is going to help us?"

"Satters," said Pullman impressively. "The 'little elephant' is another name for the Bailiff. It was because of his persuasion and promises that I came here with him. But it is not the place he gave me to understand it was. And, once here, he is unable to help us. That is not very satisfactory, is it? The Bailiff belongs to the past, not to the present. Dismiss him from your mind as of no further use, as in every way unreliable, as a man full of tricks and lies. What is more, if he came here today it was in his own interest not in ours. Now, what I tell you are secrets. Never repeat outside these walls any of the information I pass on to you."

Satters looked silent, owlishly self-important, obviously delighted to be the repository of secrets. "Okay, Pulley, I see what you mean."

The door that led into Pullman's bedroom opened, and the *valet de chambre* stepped out.

"I am sorry to disturb you, gentlemen," he said, in very good Third City English—he had, up till then, behaved as a rather self-conscious deaf mute, and as much an automaton as most domestics in the city under the shadow of Punishment. "There is a second door, as you know, to this room. I was not aware you were at home."

He wore a domestic uniform, a sort of waistcoat of black and yellow, narrow, vertical stripes, with long black sleeves. A dark green apron came just back of his knees. In a rather odd way he appeared conscious of his face, blue-chinned and disagreeably pink. The dark brown eyes mounted guard suspiciously, over the blue-pinkness, over the red mouth, the sensitive scenting nose. All this was uncomfortably exposed-except for the watchful eyes. They would have had to be covered up. The expression of the eyes contained a question.—"Well?" they said, and watched you.

"You have lived in Third City?" Pullman inquired coldly.

"Oh yes, most of my life I worked in the Phanuel Hotel; but that was some years ago."

"I see," said Pullman. "Sit down." He pointed to a chair. "Do you like Third City?"

"Better than this one," smiled the domestic.

"You do not like your own home-town, your native-place?" Pullman asked him.

The domestic shrugged.

"Have you worked in the Punishment Service?" Pullman, as he spoke, was looking at the servant's hands.

"Who in Matapolis has not?" He looked at Pullman, the director of this interrogatory, with consuming hatred.

Seeing that Pullman was asking no more questions the man composed his face in less inimical lines; he leaned forward, and began in a quiet and insinuating voice.

"Whatever you may say, you gentlemen, locked up in this house, are not enjoying yourselves very much. Now, should you gentlemen prefer to return to Third City, all you have to do is to speak to me about it, and I will either take you back myself, or I will find some reliable man to take you there. There is a continuous traffic between this and Third City." The domestic sat up, he drew a deep breath. "If you feel like moving back again, tell me when I bring your breakfast. And either that evening, or the next, you will be flying back where you came from."

Satters looked at his master, who sat smoking. Pullman gave no indication by his expression as to how he felt about the offer to carry him back to the city of Tenth Piazza and of the Phanuel Hotel.

There was a pause, at the end of which Pullman said, "I am not at liberty to take flights hither and thither. But though I am settled here for the present, thank you for your proposition." Pullman stood up and the domestic rose; he moved towards the door, bowed, and left the room.

"I don't know what you think, Pulley . . ."

"I can tell you at once. What I think of a hotel servant who does not open his mouth, who pretends that the only language he can speak is that of Matapolis, and then, most unexpectedly, addresses you in almost faultless English: I am afraid what I think is that that domestic has been hoping to overhear something incriminating. If you ask me what I think of him, my answer is, Satters, that I feel extremely uneasy about such an individual, and wonder whether everything connected with this hotel is of the same order, from Mark downwards."

"I get your meaning, yes. But, Pulley, if this bloke wants to fly back to Third City . . ."

". . . and regards us as a good opportunity, eh? How simple you are! You think you are in London or Bournemouth."

"I know I am simple, Pulley."

Pullman took a sheet of paper out of the table drawer, a fountain-pen from his pocket.

"I am about to write a note to the Bailiff?" he said, winking.

Satters sat watching him as he wrote; he had been puzzled by the wink, and was waiting to see what happened next. He did not have to wait long. In a few minutes Pullman handed him the piece of paper. At the same time he laid his forefinger upon his lips.

This is what Satters read.

"This is *not* for the Bailiff, but for you, this little note. It was a blind when I said I was about to write to the Bailiff. Thought domestic might be listening at keyhole. This man, as much as Mark, may be—probably is—an agent of Satan's. Had I said just now, 'Yes, I should like to be taken back to Third City' the domestic would, I expect, have informed Satan. The next time I saw Satan, he would have said, 'So, Mr Pullman, you want to escape from us, do you? You are plotting to fly back to Third City, are you?'—You must be very careful of that domestic. When I am out, he may come and talk to you. He may say, 'I think your friend, Mr Pullman, does not trust me. But what I say is quite genuine.' And so on. Well, Satters, when I come in, repeat what he said to you, but say nothing to him *ever-ever*!"

Pullman turned towards the door, the door out of which the domestic had stepped. Satters was still reading the letter. He read—"remember that he may be listening. Be *very careful* what you say to him (or to anybody else). Do not try to *whisper* anything private to me. Always *write* it. I will burn it in the grate. Hand this back to me, without speaking."

Satters, when he had finished reading, looked up and slowly winked, then he returned the piece of paper to Pullman, who folded it up and put it into his pocket. As he did so, his bedroom door opened, and the domestic entered.

"I will not disguise from you, sir, that I have been listening," he said solemnly. "I am not supposed to behave like this. If you speak about this to Mark I shall be dismissed at once without a character. Now, Mr Pullman, I am quite genuine. I am not in the service of the lord Sammael. I genuinely want to get back to Third City; and if I took you

and your young friend back I know that you would treat me fairly, and pay me what was agreed as soon as you got your money from the bank. You understand? If you were a Sinner, I would not do this. But you are not, and I should not be doing anything very wrong. No one would be quite *certain* who had taken you—unless you speak to Mark." He paused. "A moment, sir,—listen to what I have to say. You may, sir, at some future time, wish to leave this city. You cannot tell. Look ahead, Mr Pullman, do not act too quickly. Do not give me away now—you might need me. There is nothing to be gained in denouncing me. Have I your word, Mr Pullman, that you will not do so?" He took a revolver out of his pocket; holding it muzzle downwards, he tapped it. "I shall not use this now of course; but it would be certain I should *never* use it, if I knew that, although you do not trust me, you will not betray me."

Satters looked wide-owl-eyed, but startled, at the man and the gun. Pullman looked at the floor.

"Return your gun to your pocket," he said. "It is irrelevant." Then he looked up impressively. "Producing that gun has however convinced me of one thing."

"Of what?" said the man, pointing the gun at Pullman.

"That you are a phoney," Pullman answered contemptuously. "Once more, put away that relic of the Punishment Service."

The man returned the gun to his pocket. He continued to sit in the chair in which he had taken up his position as soon as he had entered.

"This is not a punishment cell, is it?" Pullman asked.

"Oh no," said the man.

"In that case, when you come in, do not do so without knocking, and, when you are inside it, do not sit down, unless you are invited to do so."

The man rose, laughed a hard short laugh, and left the room.

Pullman looked at Satters. "You see," he said, in the matter-of-fact terms of one demonstrating something. "It is as I told you."

Pullman took a piece of paper out of the drawer; he began to write on it.

"Prophetic words. I foretell. The domestic will no longer appear while we are here—he will perhaps be returned to the

Punishment Police for the present, or given a week's leave. Mark will say that he deeply apologises, and that he has dismissed him—I hope that this will make you *very suspicious* in future."

He did not blot this, but waved it a little. Satters watched him solemnly. At last Pullman handed it over to his squire.

The accuracy of this prognostic was demonstrated in due course; in the cloudy brain of Satterthwaite, before he ate, its justness was established.

Mark suspended his cooking, and walked into the room reserved for guests.

Pullman, who had just entered, was standing in front of an open fire.

"Good evening," said the guest. "Mr Satterthwaite will be here in a few minutes."

"Mr Pullman, sir," said Mark. "I am the bearer of a message. Let me give it you at once."

"A message?"

"Yes, sir, from the lord Sammael. Tomorrow morning at ten o'clock, you will be fetched, sir, by car. You will be taken to Dis, the Punishment Centre."

"Oh." Pullman grimaced. "Not for good, I hope?"

"No. Things like that are not for *you*, Mr Pullman. You are to be shown a few of the worst Sinners. Are you interested, sir? If not, the lord Sammael said, just dismiss the car."

"I will go, of course," Pullman said. "Ten o'clock?"

"Yes, sir. That is the time. Mr Pullman, there is one more thing I have to say. I apologise for the behaviour of the *valet de chambre* today. I expect that you could see the kind of man he is. Dismissed Prison Police. Out of compassion I gave him a job. But . . .! Anyhow, he will molest you no more, Mr Pullman. I told him to leave within half an hour; he was gone in a quarter. He is a very insolent fellow."

"How did you know that, Mark?"

Mark's face became stern and clouded.

"Mark, wash that question out. Never mind about that. But what you did with the man was quite unnecessary. You should not have dismissed him. Besides, his successor will listen at the keyhole, just the same as he did. All domestics do. Domestics are born with their ears to keyholes!"

Mark laughed. "Oh, you are a caution, Mr Pullman."

"No. Are not doctors born with their stethoscopes ready to place on the heart? and princes born with their ears cocked for flatterers?"

Satters entered the room, noisily clearing his throat.

"Ah, Mr Satterthwaite, I was just telling your friend that I have dismissed the *valet de chambre* who so misbehaved himself earlier today. Mr Pullman, will you please translate, will you inform Mr Satterthwaite of what has been done in the case of the *valet de chambre.*"

Pullman informed Satters that the gentleman with the blue cheeks, who stepped in and out of a room like a marionette, had, *as he, Pullman, had prophesied,* been dismissed.

Satters stood, obviously struggling, in his memory, to revivify a prophecy. At last his face lit up. He beamed darkly, and, without any care for diplomatic caution, he winked.

## VIII

ONLY A FEW HOURS after Satters had transmitted to his master the words of the Bailiff, that gentleman had an interview, which fully bore out the tenor of his message to Pullman, saying that he could be of no further use to him.

Now he was dressed as a gentleman of Matapolis, no longer as a fantastic Oriental potentate, as he had still appeared upon his arrival—and indeed had done so until that morning, which indicated the importance he attached to this interview. He wore an alpaca suit, half-way between white and black, of a pleasant blue-grey. He had apparently been massaged, the scalp as much as the chin. His squarenoseishness was emphasised. He had the combativeness of a small bird who had—for some reason—settled within a few feet of an eagle; but his eyes were heartrending—they would have softened the eagle's heart, although no eagle, man or bird, had ever lived which had allowed itself to be mollified by anything whatever. His eyes seemed to irritate beyond words the stern man he had come to see.

Sammael sat at his desk. The ex-Bailiff had drawn up the hardest, the most uncomfortable, chair he could find, and sat in front of the desk, his hands folded in his lap.

"First," said Sammael severely, "why did you choose the least comfortable chair you could find? Secondly, what made you choose to adopt that expression of high pathos, and why fold your hands in that submissive manner? Are you a penitent?"

"If you like to call it that, lord Sammael. I am someone who a few days ago enjoyed a great deal of power, today I have none whatever. Finally I know that you have no liking for me, to put it mildly, and your power is absolute and immeasurable. How am I to look, under these circumstances? I am terrified, I am acutely sorry for myself. Would you have me attempt to conceal these feelings?—That would be absurd: of *course* I have those feelings. You know quite well that those must be my feelings. Should I come swaggering into this room—with an expression both calm and gay?—Then, physically, I am a petty creature in your presence, lord Sammael. I must feel abject, seeing I am someone of whom you do not approve."

Sammael listened disagreeably. After a pause, he answered him. "You do not make your insignificant physique any more impressive, or more agreeable, by lighting up your eyes, mouth, nose, beforehand, with that expression. There is nothing pitiable about you. One may admire your great dexterity and resourcefulness. Your intelligence appeals to me. If you had put that to other uses . . . But consider what your career has been like! You have been an evil man—as thorough-going a Sinner as any of the men and women we punish down there." He waved his hand towards the window. "You had, in your youth, strict training here—at the University, and, even more, under the guidance of your father. Yet, yet . . ."

"You have been misinformed, great lord! I have only behaved sinfully when compelled to do so by the circumstances. I was a foreigner in Third City. There was a great deal of ill-will, I was fighting for my existence all along. Then, I had to carve out for myself a great position, the governor by no means assisting me. I started without resources and was obliged to provide myself with money in any way that offered. Such ways cannot always be nice ways. But I have at all times regarded myself as a servant of yours. I have always thought of myself as doing your work . . ."

"The work of the Devil, yes?" Sammael interrupted.

"That is how your enemies refer to you—I know how utterly mistaken they are about you, lord Sammael. I know that there is no devil except he known by them as God. It was against their 'God' that I was bending my efforts . . ."

"Ah!" exclaimed Sammael. "Ah! By behaving in a way that would accord with their mistaken notion of 'the Devil'—a being, that is, the very essence of Evil—the arch-enemy of the moral; one revelling in sexual vice, the organiser of sexual licence, the great exponent of lawless debauch, the adversary of all that is intelligent, noble, and inspired in life.—Yes, so you filled Third City with the imbecilic, the vapid, the homosexual, in the interests of the Devil of course. In order to please *me*." Sammael looked up at his visitor, and at the same time displaced a book, flinging it down on the table with an admonitory bang. "How little, my friend, you have understood Satan, as they like to call me. You interpreted the Devil after your own image; what you would be if you were in the position I am in." Sammael stood up, and the ex-Bailiff rose trembling

to his feet.—"You should have looked closer. If you were in my place, would you inhabit a house like this? Do you see any women here? Or do you think I have a harem hidden away somewhere, perhaps underground—down there?" Sammael jabbed his finger down towards the floor. "You should not have accepted the 'devil' nonsense. Think of this colony here—thirty thousand of us: it is an almost ideally orderly community. Every member is regular in his habits—no excessive drinking, early hours, no women (the source of most disorder). And I, the so-called Devil, am their leader! What could be less devilish? Yet we have the power, the wealth, to enjoy lives of unbridled licence, of the utmost luxury.—Why did you not study our lives and so come to possess a clear understanding of the person in whose interests your birth and upbringing caused you to work?"

The Bailiff stirred, and showed signs of an inclination to speak. Sammael paused and looked at him.

"Great lord, the kind of life you chose to live yourself was not the issue. What kind of life you desired Man to live was the important thing. That it was not in your interest to have a masterful efficient type of man in Third City I took for granted. I was not wrong in believing you one not very fond of the descendants of Adam and Eve."

"Right!" boomed Sammael. "And I am not very fond of a filthy little rat like yourself, sir, who combines the lowest vices, the blackest crimes of the descendants of Adam and Eve, with the longevity, and some of the magical potentialities of ourselves... As you know, I would take over Third City, if that were possible without too much trouble; first, because it is so fine a city, and, secondly, because it is inhabited, not by people of your breed, but by a sweeter-smelling population. The first step I should take, if I were master of Third City, would be to place a very different type of magistrate from you in the camp outside it, where the selection is made of suitable citizens. *You* I should hang by the neck in the middle of Tenth Piazza. And why that fool of a governor did not do so long ago I cannot understand.—This I hope illustrates how greatly I appreciate your labours on my behalf."

The Bailiff stood there, like a schoolboy, weeping: he made no noise, except for an occasional gulp.

"My life has been a failure," he said slowly. "It has been

a farce. I cannot help my character. Who can help being what they are? But I might at least have worked for you to your satisfaction. There was I, sitting in my palace, as unpopular with the angelic governor of Third City as with you."

Sammael laughed. "Too bad! Not a popular boy, either with the black angel or with the white. Evidently, angels, of whatever variety, are allergic to you."

The lord Sammael stepped rapidly back to his seat behind the table and took up a bundle of papers. The Bailiff promptly returned to his place upon the plain wooden chair.

"Here I have a catalogue of your sins. It is a frightful charge-sheet."

"Handed you by my faithless secretary!" screamed the Bailiff, his eyebrows lost among the furrows of his forehead, his hand clutching his handkerchief. "Do you accept everything he says as true? Is my word not as good as that of a secretary? Let me at least defend myself! Tell me, lord Sammael, what are these *sins* of mine!"

Sammael stood up. "No, sir," he said. "It is not my function to pick about in your dossier—about as dirty a dossier as even this city has ever seen, I should suppose. No, I will send you down to Dis, where all of those accusations can be examined, and they will report back to me."

As he listened, the Bailiff's face became a green-grey. His teeth began to chatter. By the time Sammael had finished speaking, there was a rapid rattle coming from this small shaven head, with the staring eyes.

"You will send me to the Punishment Centre?" the trembling voice began to articulate, like a man speaking to himself, "me to the Punishment Centre, to the Punishment Centre, me? Me? Me, me, me, ME?!" The voice had become piercingly thin. "You will send me to the Punishment Centre!"

"Yes, *you*—stupid as well as bad. You have not even the ability to keep some of your ill-gotten wealth."

The teeth ceased to chatter. There was a deep silence.

"My lord," and it was a stronger voice that spoke, of a sudden. "As your lordship says, *I* have no money, my mother is a rich woman. She will pay you a very considerable sum . . ."

A roar came from Sammael, "You thought I was asking for money, did you—some of the money you bled out of the putrid Lesbians of the Yenery, bitch-man that you are!"

The Bailiff flung himself violently on the floor, and, as he pitched about, a terrible shrill howl filled every crevice of the room. Then abruptly the howl became a howling prayer.

"Lord, great lord, dazzling lord, I will serve you as faithfully as a dog, as a dog, lord, all my life. I implore you, forgive me my folly!"

Sammael was apparently deaf to this music; he arranged two sets of papers side by side, rose, and came from behind his table. The Bailiff scuttled rapidly after him, and, seizing his nearest leg, glued his lips to the lord Sammael's shoe.

"Darling lord," he cried fervently—"heaven-born! Pity this miserable little smudge: this weeping sparrow who has been smashed by the wind—great lord, I implore, scorn to use your limitless power upon so pitiable a worm as I am. Lovely master, mercy, mercy, mercy, your greatness demands it. You are far too great a lord to punish such garbage as crawls at your feet—spit on me and forget me, mighty lord, greatest of archangels, immortal master! Pity!"

Sammael had briefly struggled with him for possession of his foot, then he stood, frustrated, glaring down at this tenacious "smudge". The music of degradation rose to resentful ears.

"By weighting my foot down with your stinking presence, sir, you are not recommending yourself to mercy, any more than by your bestial stream of flattery. I should have refused to see you, had I known that you would molest me."

But the wretched man clung all the tighter to Sammael's foot, sobbing and shrieking in a crazy spasm of lamentation.

This was altogether beyond Sammael's endurance. He took a step forward with his free foot, then, with a spectacular heave, lifted the bellowing bundle of humanity into the air with a final expulsive spasm; the Bailiff's small body soared high above the floor, and crashed against the door. Sammael turned rapidly and pressed a button upon his table, and almost simultaneously the door opened.

"Pick him up, please," he said to the police corporal who had entered. "He will probably pretend to be hurt. But take one man and march him down to Dis. Should he sit down, or lie down on the ground, obtain an ambulance and drive him to Punishment Hospital B. Tell the doctor in charge, from me, to teach him a lesson for giving so much trouble. Take him outside now, I will prepare a letter which I wish you to give

to the Judge Heshmer. If he is not in Hospital B, hand him over to Sonnerson."

The corporal saluted. A terrible scream of self-pity rose from the small body on the floor—he had refused to be "picked up".

Noticing the corporal's difficulties, who was only a smallish man, Sammael again rang the bell on his desk. A domestic appeared.

"Send two policemen here. Do not bother about him, corporal. We will get two of your men to carry him out."

As the lord Sammael was speaking two uniformed men appeared. The removal of the Bailiff was a formidable feat, the bitterness of which no one had foreseen. One of the policemen had his face severely scratched, an eye was almost torn out. The Bailiff's false teeth remained in the palm of the policeman's hand. As the struggling men were crossing the entrance hall, piercing screams came from the room on the other side of it. The uproar was such that startled domestics appeared in the background, uncertain as to what course they should take, and police could be heard shouting to one another outside. The office door opened and Sammael sprang out, nearly dashing to the ground the police and their prisoner; he recoiled, leapt across the hall, and disappeared in the room from which the screams issued. Seeing his opportunity, one of the policemen hammered the Bailiff's face with his fist, spitting at him such epithets as suggest themselves to a policeman. The face of the lord Sammael appeared at the door into which he had shot: he observed the policeman about to administer another hammer blow to the small red face of the "little elephant", the term invented by maternal love.

"I am glad you are silencing him. Good. Good!" the lord Sammael approved.

## IX

When pullman stepped out to the car at ten o'clock, he asked himself how much longer his nerves would tolerate this: he had no idea whether this meant he would return to these apartments a free man, or if this time tomorrow he would be in Hell. What game the lord Sammael was playing he could not imagine, nor whether his intents were wicked or charitable.—As he sat down in this now familiar seat he crossed himself: lest the chauffeur should see him doing it in the mirror, he began the cross by affecting to dust his hat, continued by scratching his left shoulder, and took his right hand back to his pocket (in which he held it because it was cold, as were his feet), in a majestic sweep which carried it very high up across the chest.

It was with a sensation of appalling loneliness that he reached the ugly brick building which obviously was his destination—for the chauffeur just stopped in front of it, without looking round. This man did not approve of his master using this handsome automobile for driving dirty little Sinners hither and thither.

However, to get out, to enter that building unescorted, Pullman refused to do: he stayed where he was, pretending not to understand. He must have sat there for five minutes: he thought the chauffeur had gone to sleep, for he gave no sign of life whatever. At the end of that time someone came up and spoke to the apparently sleeping man, who, Pullman supposed, was following much the same line as himself, namely, to sit still and await events. The stranger, an official of some kind, talked for a few minutes, then he looked into the car very severely at Pullman. The latter pretended not to notice him. A few more minutes passed, when, with a threatening fracas, the door of the car opened. The uniformed man was glaring at him silently. *This is it,* was Pullman's inner comment. His heart stood still. He had come to the end of the road—he had the answer at last to the persistent questions prompted by events.

He looked with anger, even with rage, at the intruder. *Fear* must not be displayed—not yet; and only an equally acute emotion was competent to conceal it.

"What is it!" he barked.

"Vous parlez français?" the man said. He answered that he did: and the rest of the proceedings went forward in French. The lord Sammael wished him to see the Administrative Officer, Dr Hachilah. He invited Pullman to accompany him: he said he would show him where the offices of Dr Hachilah were to be found. It would be very difficult for him to locate it by himself . . . When he left the car, the man walked at his side. There was a little conversation.—"Monsieur must find it *embêtant* that no one speaks any language he can understand," and a few more remarks like this. Evidently the man had been deliberately terrorizing him at first, but Pullman refused to change back again into his attitude prior to the advent of this person. At length they entered an office, and a male clerk, on learning who it was, at once led him into an inner room.

Dr Hachilah came towards him with outstretched hand, saying, in very good English, "Mr Pullman, I am very glad to make your acquaintance. The lord Sammael, with whom I was speaking yesterday, told me that you might be interested to visit some of the Punishment Cells."

Dr Hachilah looked disarmingly like the sort of foreign merchant one would meet in the City of London. His head was broad at the top, his dark eyes slanted down in a long mongoloid slope; his bald backward sloping forehead shone, and his smile was a warm and commercial one.—This was obviously not a man who was going to have him precipitated into a cauldron of boiling oil, or a ditch of red-hot coal.

Dr Hachilah had been in his shirt -sleeves; as he put on his jacket he observed, "It is rather chillier today, is it not?"

They left the red-brick building, and made their way past two other buildings, one the hospital which the lord Sammael had entered to have his bite attended to, at the conclusion of their terrifying drive among the man-goats.

"That is one of the two Punishment Service hospitals," Dr Hachilah informed him. "A really first-rate one. Although small, you would find it up to the standard of the Middlesex or the London Hospital."

"Have you been to London, sir?"

"Oh yes," the official replied. "I was there for several years."

Pullman did not ask him how he managed to get there, but he reflected how accessible the Earth must be to Hell and its citizens.

Rising in front of them now was the abrupt mountainside, converted into a towering edifice, of what appeared to be twenty or more storeys. A sort of murmur issued from it—what sound it was, it was difficult to say, but it was anything but silent, as a building. The hallway was full of police and officials, standing and conversing in groups, or moving to and fro, entering and leaving a half-dozen lifts.

"I suggest we visit first a set of cells we name 'The Inferno'. They are a kind of caricature of Dante's Inferno. They are rather amusing, though terribly macabre, of course, as everything else here, for that matter." Dr Hachilah smiled. "But you know where you are, of course. This *is* Hell."

When they entered the lift, Pullman's guide exclaimed, "Are you a nervous man?" the answer to which was, "Yes, very."

They got out at Floor Ten. "I will take you first," said Dr Hachilah, "to the cell where we shall find Paolo and Francesca. Have you ever read Dante's *Inferno?*" Pullman nodded. "You may remember Dante finds himself in a circle where a strong wind continually blows. Blown along by this, like flocks of birds, are an endless number of lovers—sinful lovers. He stops two of them—Paolo and Francesca, an adulterous pair. They cling to one another, as they had in their sinful past, but they are not so enthusiastic about being blown along by a high wind for ever. Well, there is no *for ever* here. When these two Sinners have grown staled in a few months' time, we shoot them and put in another pair. These two have two or three months to bill and coo. I will bet, Mr Pullman, that they are sorry they did not restrain their amorous passions."

They went along the passage to a door marked 15. The official turned a key, and they both entered. It was painted over to represent a wild October sky, through which everywhere couples were represented as flying. The pressure of a quite powerful wind was felt as soon as one entered the room.—In the centre of the room were a man and woman strapped to one another. About four feet from the floor they were suspended from the ceiling, and arranged at an angle very near the horizontal, simulating flight.

Dr Hachilah went up to them, and slapping the woman upon the buttocks spoke in Italian.

"Ah, Francesca, how is love?"

He asked Pullman to approach and pushing aside a garment, revealed the fact that they were naked, and indecently glued to one another, the man exactly placed to facilitate sinful love.

"At first," Dr Hachilah told him, "the fellow took full advantage of his favourite position. But now . . . (Dr Hachilah shook his head) "now there has been no sinful activity for months." He stepped aside, invitingly, saying to Pullman, "You may inspect how things are for yourself. I do not believe that Paolo is capable of obliging Francesca any more."

The couple were violently shaken.

The lips of the man and woman were in some way fastened to one another, but Pullman saw the eyes of the man alive with the dazzling colours of a diamond of great value, his mouth was drawn down at the corners in a spasm of bitterness; it was a thin but very dark bow, taut as though it might break, and curved around underneath—as if a draughtsman's pencil had got thus far in the drawing of a tense oval, and then stopped, with a sharp nick of the pencil. As the whalebone-line of the mouth strained and strained, above the bloodshot diamond rolled, and then the phlegm rattled, as the voice organised itself among the sinuses. The trussed-up pinned-down man spoke. Since his lips were fastened upon those of the everlasting Francesca, when he spoke, he spoke from under his harsh black moustache, in or upon the woman's mouth. He panted his invective where the lips lived together, coldly compressed, the woman's eyebrow drawn up in the classical arc of agony, the large distended eye rolled into the corner of her head.

"Ecco ancora la nostra vecchia faccia-di-merda—puzza—ratto scabbioso—figlio di una cagna sifilitica—pancia scrofulosa—nudo-muso—babbuino—percorrente pezzo di vomitaticcio—sputacchiera."

"Now, Paolo! Remember that the gutter-speech of the Florentine explodes up the nostrils of the fair Francesca. Or if she is so incautious as to open her mouth it goes down her throat. So do stop spitting up her nose; she looks terribly distressed from here."

These words were spoken in Italian: and the bloodshot diamond rolled in Paolo's head, the voice came crackling from a red-hot stomach, answering his tormentor.

"Se un angelo di Dio mi domanda di prendere il paradiso per me stesso, bottino, sapete che cosa prenderei? In questo caso sceglierei una mezz'ora chiusa in camera con voi, senza arma, faccia-di-merda: vorrei strappare il vostro cuore, scarpire il vostro puzzolente sesso, cavarvi fuori gli occhi, e finalmente vorrei caccarvi sopra."

"It is not the first time you have paid me that compliment. If I were to pick my paradise, it would be in another universe to yourself and that legendary bit of skirt, my dear Paolo." He shook his head. "This pair," he said to Pullman, "are extinct, I fear. I had better send them down to be *fusillés* tomorrow. I will tell the officer that I shall expect this cell to be vacated by tomorrow noon."

"Cacca di puzzola sifilitica," Paolo venomously croaked as they left the cell.

Outside, Dr Hachilah stood clapping his hands delicately together, as if he wished he had a basin in which to wash them. Meanwhile he conversed with the visitor.

"It is not an unreasonable claim, I think; we consider our *Paolo and Francesca* a great improvement on Dante's sentimental pair. If it is a sin of the first magnitude—we hold that it is that—to indulge in a pleasure-impulse, and in doing so violently to terminate a sacrament, the sacrament of marriage, in which the destinies of children are concerned, to strike at that essential union at the root of the State—all for pleasure, like eating an icecream, or a luscious peach: for this frivolous sin to turn people into starlings, or some other pretty bird, and to set them gracefully drifting, in each other's arms, upon an autumn blast—*that* does not appear to us a bitter enough punishment. Here we have caricatured this far too attractive expiation: we have fixed them as if they were in flight, but we have fixed them in a horible rigidness—lips to lips and sex to sex. They may never move a fraction of an inch from that mockery of love. Three times a day we un-glue their hands, and pour nutriment down their throats, and we have divers means for evacuating them—though Paolo is deliberately incontinent, the dirty devil. He is the dirtiest Paolo I have ever experienced, so far. So we arrange our pair of adulterous

lovers. And we drop in and inselt them every day. Finally we shoot them."

Hachilah looked at Pullman, who disguised his feelings in a frowning mask of studious attention obscuring any more private thoughts which might be moving through his uncontrollable mind.

"The Last Judgement . . ." he began.

"Ah, we have not the premises to maintain in perpetuity the billions of physical identities the Last Judgement involves," Hachilah answered. "It is a crucial omission, I agree. But we have a library of records. The height, the colour of the hair and eyes, and many other details, and of course the full name, may be found there. Before anyone is shot or otherwise destroyed, the record is checked. That is the best we have been able to do."

"A-a-a-a-h," Pullman intoned.

A white-coated assistant came up to Hachilah very respectfully, and was evidently making a report. When, with a slight bow, he retired, Hachilah informed the visitor that one of the exhibits had died. "Where the treatment is severe we cannot guarantee that they will not just snuff out. Well now," he continued, looking up and down the corridor, "I think that we will visit our version of Canto 28."

He propped himself against the wall, while he outlined what they were about to see.

"We do not adhere exactly to the *Divine Comedy*: the punishment you are about to witness is parallel to the imagery of Canto 28, but the sins do not correspond. For instance, the first Sinner we shall visit is a Sodomite (catalogued by Dante as *Sin against Nature)*; but there is no Sodomy in Canto 28. We are merely acquainted with the kind of destiny reserved for the Sodomite."

"I see," said Pullman.

Dr Hachilah moved along towards a "cell" which was the next but one to the Paolo and Francesca one. He liked surprising his visitor (he was, Pullman surmised, the creator of these vignettes of punishment and of suffering). He waited until they were both in front of the door, then turned the handle, and flung the door open. As they stepped inside, they found themselves in a subtropical scene. A naked figure of a small, spectacled man of sixty odd, lay on his face upon a camp-bed.

There was the desert, with two palms appropriately growing there, but nothing explained the presence of the bed.

The pink-skinned nude, whose feet were nearer to them than the bald, very pink head, with its curving white fringe above the neck, was slashed in many places—the wounds seeming quite fresh.

"We have here a Briton—but his tongue is split, so he cannot denounce us! What this rather solitary, but extremely rich, bookworm regarded as a shrewd move was to emigrate, with his capital, as soon as the bloodless revolution started in England, following the first war. There was still time to save all his money, provided he transferred it to a British colony. He selected Kenya, a nice gentlemanly colony, good climate, money as safe as houses, lions to hunt in perfect safety—Italy and Greece within easy reach.

"Three Cambridge intellectuals, Kings", orthodoxly Sodomitic, had made Kenya their home a year or two earlier, and one, a kind of friend, with whom he corresponded, discreetly advertised the two or three advantages which were possessed by no other colony. A double-first in Classics or rustication for homosexuality were things which gave a cachet to the Cambridge intellectual's views of places and men, and his purchase of a small farm north of Nairobi was in large measure the result. Kenya had come up to his expectations, his money had softened everything for him. He was extremely fond of his house-boy. When the terroristic organisation named Mau-Mau, with its campaign of wholesale murder, became hot news, he closed his eyes. He was slow to stop saying that a lot of old women had the 'wind up' and to shrug off this menace—this Mau-Mau. So he was incredulous when his sweetly-smiling house-boy entered his sitting-room, one evening, flourishing a long cutlass, at the head of a gang of armed Kikuyu, and proceeded to slash him all over, to hold him down while they slit his tongue, and after that debagged him, and proceeded to ementulation. The bloody remains of his sex was found—where do you think? Thrust into a part of his anatomy very well known to the murderous house-boy. The old fellow was dead before his Kikuyu visitors had left his farm—ten of his fingers in the house-boy's pockets. Then he came to us. His major sin was not, as at first we supposed it was, the sin of Sodom: it was the sin against Genius."

"What may that be?" Pullman asked.

"It is a sin to the punishment of which Dante Alighieri was much addicted."

"Ah yes, I see," very grandly, was Pullman's stern acknowledgement that he understood.

Like a very lethargic and past-caring animal in a zoological garden, he who had sinned against Genius screwed his head half-round to sneer with a bitter thin and bloodless lip, to glimmer through his gold-rimmed spectacles at the intruders. The tobacco-green eyes burned with a lingering, and unclean, derision—as if to say, darkly, "Stick it up your you-know-what!"

"He is not at all an appetising man," Hachilah commented. "He is one of those people about whom one feels that he has received far less than he merited. I would blast away that tailward greeting from that little eye of that obscene old skunk. Our Bloomsbury smart-Alec is not my favourite Sinner."

Pullman looked at his Virgil with surprise.

"Elderly pervert, listen." Hachilah spoke directly to the sullen Sinner. "With the spite and quarrelsomeness of all your tribe, you made use of your money to persecute and to injure a man under the special protection of God. We are not punishing you for that at present. When this *tableau vivant* is over and done with, I shall see to it that you undergo a more active punishment—small gilded beast, you stink!"

With this Hachilah led the way out of the room. Outside a woman was hurrying past, her forearms dripping with blood. They nodded to one another, and Pullman's guide explained what such things signified. "She is a doctor, who is on her way to the wash-room through there. She has been busy keeping the wounds fresh. The healing process must be arrested, you see." He coughed. "I am a doctor," he added. "There are more than a thousand of us here."

"It is remarkable how you keep these people alive—these bleeding wrecks," Pullman ventured.

"Great care has to be observed, and constant attention is necessary. But it must be remembered that we are in a symbolical, as it were—not a real world. These people, these Sinners, have their being, to some extent, in something like a painted existence. The tortures, like those of the figures in the

Inferno of Dante, are of nightmarish kind—it is as if they dreamed. You remember Bertrand de Born in the *Inferno*, who held his own head in his hand,—grasping it by the hair, and using it as a lantern—and quite willing to discuss his plight! Well, no *real* man would be able to do that; it is only in the verse of Dante, or in the pages of Hans Andersen, that people do such things as these."

"I recognise that," Pullman answered, greatly surprised that this pedestrian official understood such things as that. And his mind reverted, immediately, to the terrible punishment enacted by the lord Sammael—handing the sinful woman over to the fury of the animals. Would Sammael give the same explanation? Do all these people think of themselves as acting in a dream? And these doctors, in this vast hospital, engaged in what might be called the Surgery of Morals, do they all look upon their daily routine as ethical? Also, do they all see themselves as operating in a dream, for the moral health of human existence? He decided to keep Dr Hachilah under observation. It was also his intention when he was by himself, to analyse the creative mind of Dante. It seemed to him, at first sight, that Dante's infernal persons were everywhere less real than life; a quality of the reality like that of the fairy-tale or folk-lore infinitely less real (badly real) than they would be in the hands of a contemporary writer. The case of Bertrand de Born was a very good one to take, and demonstrated a very careful reading on the part of Hachilah of the text of Dante.

However, Hachilah had something to say about the next *vignette* as he liked to call it, and Pullman's mind refocused upon the Dantesque tour he was making.

"The figure we are about to see is a great catch; as it is something more than a man, a great international spirit in fact, we were very surprised when he, or "it" made his appearance here. We quite realised that Hell was the suitable place for him. But since he is an evil principle rather than a human individual we were puzzled, at first, how to treat him.

"We are going to pass in to a divided compartment; he is in one, and in the other is the British spirit, in the person of a City Magnate. Britain is a blurred national entity; a World Empire, a little bit of everything, and so, it seemed to me, the only nation in the same category as my tall friend, who is

perhaps my most spectacular exhibit, and about whom I must provide you with something as concrete as I can make it.

"Think of it if you like, or think of him, as International Capital, it is what he is more frequently called. Any country which is big enough to take him, and upon which land he momentarily fastens himself, suffers abominably. In the last century he settled on the United States, and tried to slice it in half. He succeeded in splitting the nation in half, and keeping it split down the centre for years. He was a splitter-down-the-middle, a universal bisector from the beginning. If he could have got to the moon, he would have split that down the middle too. Today he has no tangible national centre. If he could be fastened down to a territorial habitat, it would be the Bahamas or the Caribbean Islands, what the English call the West Indies. But he operates universally. You can see his hand in Europe today—a typical piece of work. It is split right across the middle; a so-called Iron Curtain marks this grand division. Then, no nation is intact; each one is, in one way or another, split down the middle.

"This figure is eminently genteel. He is very indignant at finding himself caged, and treated as Dante treated Mahomet, cleft from the chin, down the centre, as far as the place where he breaks wind."

Hachilah turned, as if to move into room nine. "We shall find him, in the words of Dante, *tra le gambe pendevan le minugia; la corata pareva e 'l tristo sacco che merda fa di quel che si trangugia.*"

The prospect of encountering a person, with his entrails hanging between his legs, and the machinery exposed by which food is converted into excrement, as described in these fearful lines of Dante's, succeeded in shaking Pullman a little.

"But let us come in," said Hachilah, "and examine this World Bird." The Doctor flung the door open, and they entered the large room, divided in the middle by a partly transparent partition, and first they came upon the representative of the British Imperium. But Pullman's gaze was immediately absorbed by the tall, abstract, cartoonesque figure beyond. The head of this figure was a large pink egg, the heavy end downwards. Half way up, this pink egg was bisected by the smiling mouth; the two eyes were two heavy slits—for he smiled all over. Pullman felt himself smiled at, and,

although this was only a symbolic figure, below the waist-line horribly dissected, he felt impelled to smile back.

Reaching from his neck-band to his waist-line was a light slate-blue shirt, in the centre of which was a curious, brightly coloured device. This was in the form of a circle, and within it a number of smaller circles. These represented the principal nations of the world—the Soviet a deep red circle, a yellow one for China, and so on. In the centre was an empty space, and this was almost filled by a dark star. In general appearance this design was based on the Stars and Stripes, but a solitary universal State was there, in place of the forty-eight States of the Union.

Pullman considered that the egg-shaped, pink vacuity was excellently symbolic of this spirit adventurer, with its roots everywhere and nowhere. The anatomical machinery picked intact out of the "Divina Commedia", most appropriately selected by Dante, gave the lower part of this figure a macabre appearance.

"Good morning, Doctor," the stately scarecrow drawled. "A visitor? You might have given me a fig-leaf, Doctor."

Pullman could not help carrying his eyes towards the area indicated, but of course the sex was not there, there was only an intestine.

The International Embodiment addressed himself to Pullman.

"You are surprised to see me in this curious Inferno," he said. "I do not know how these things are decided, do you? —who was the beast responsible for this hideous mutilation I have no idea."

"That was me. I treated you as Mahomet was treated by Dante." Hachilah smiled back into the false smiling eyes of the great manipulator.

"You! I might have known that. You have the face of a wop gangster." He shuddered, and the *sacco che merda fa* shook.

"Old hypocrite," Hachilah observed.

Curling his lip, the Abstraction said, "What can a third-rate cad like yourself know about victims of some miscarriage of divine justice like myself? There is something picayune and squalid about the whole of this outfit."

"He can do as much talking as he likes; some pretty nasty

insults are levelled at us, I can assure you. But we can take it," smiled Hachilah.

They were now moving away from the Bisector, and had entered the pen of the Symbolic Britain. This figure had his legs, and he exhibited much sympathy for his fellow-sufferer. He stood with an apron of fivers, and a golden sovereign embedded in his stomach.

"Our jailer is a communist," he protested scornfully. "Everything he does proves him a Muscovite. He is a red fanatic. Don't speak to him, sir! I don't."

Hachilah was displeased. "This man is the kind of fool who thinks that only Stalinists frown on Usury," he said. "The Christian Church had for centuries legislated against it. This ignorant old fool will have to answer for his offensiveness before very long."

The Briton swelled with indignation, shouting so that his neighbour might hear, "I personally shall call this rat a red rat whenever he puts his dirty nose inside this room."

Pullman had thought that there was nothing you could say to this imperturbable official which could anger him, but here was an accusation made by a Sinner which seemed to get his goat. Why was this? Was he a Communist? That was the obvious explanation. But Pullman did not believe that his was the type of anger to be expected from a Communist. Could it be that an accusation of that kind was one that was damaging to a member of the staff? Did that indicate that the lord Sammael had any partisanship where political passions were concerned, Pullman wondered?

This figure was very ingeniously chosen, the visitor thought, to symbolise the City of London. The exposure of the anatomy of the Bisector made any attempt to make him look like a million dollars out of the question. But the John Bull knighted did really look very rich; his jowliness bespoke income-brackets ranging up into the millions.

When they were outside in the corridor once more, Hachilah exploded. "That old son-of-a-bitch afflicts me with his stupidity. I mean the Briton of course. To object to see such vast wealth in the possession of so doltish a creature is to him proof positive that you are a reader of the *Daily Worker*. He swells with respect for that old drawling double-crosser next door to him; for he is of the race which sticks up statues to all

the wrong people, losing its power and riches as quickly as it acquires them; being devoid of imagination and all logical ability, when an Empire half the size of the world drops in his lap, he is quickly bullied out of keeping it, and hands it back to Tom, Dick, and Harry. I am only a doctor; you must excuse my medical man's plain spoken ways."

The smile with which Pullman greeted this was gilded with superiority. "Where I began life was in Ireland," he remarked, "where the intelligence of Our Conquerors is not regarded as their most conspicuous attribute."

Hachilah plumed himself upon a deep knowledge of the politics of all the minor races of Europe. So now he smiled at Pullman with sympathetic understanding. He did not ignore the significance of the magic words "Potato Famine".

"Ah, I see of course. You could say, better than I can, anything on *that* subject."

Knit in the bonds of a common contempt, nearer to one another than they had been when Hachilah had supposed Pullman to be a *pure* Englishman, they turned towards the exit from Hachilah's Dantesque floor; they began descending the stairs to the floor beneath.

Before they had reached it, they heard a good deal of noise—a contrast to the Inferno floor. The most terrifying screams electrified the foreground, but as soon as they had left the stairway they seemed to be in the midst of a universal disturbance, to the right; the men who passed them, and even the women, had faces inflamed with some dark emotion. A young, white-coated man moved quickly, in a concentrated scuttle: in a kidney dish he bore a pair of human eyes.

"This is a very active group of cells. They are at their height just now. I should greatly enjoy to remove the eyes, personally, of a certain pestilential old gentleman upstairs. But my taste is not so dynamic as is that of my colleagues on this floor."

They had taken a few steps to the right, and then suddenly almost from the nearest cell, a female roar took possession of their hearing and in Pullman's case riveted his heart. Oh, this was the agony of someone he had known. He found himself running into Hachilah: two women, both in clinical outfits, appeared in the door of the cell, both with flaming but unseeing eyes. One it seemed was in pursuit of the other, the fugitive holding stiffly, as it were hieratically, a long curved knife.

She flashed across the corridor, vanishing in the staff premises at the rear. A terrible bellowing apparition appeared at the door of the cell, her eyes angrily glaring at them, blood pouring down her legs. The Doctor began blowing a whistle, when two Punishment Police rushed at the woman, and disappeared with her, inside the cell, followed by one of the two nurses, or whatever they were, who had left the room so violently only a minute or two earlier. Very confused, but obedient to some magnetic attraction, Pullman was forced into the cell, and found that Hachilah was for a moment just ahead of him.

The two police held the furious woman down upon a mattressed trolley, a warder was lifting a hypodermic syringe out of a case; whereas Hachilah knelt on the floor beside yet another female member of the Punishment staff, who appeared to be wounded. The Doctor had unbuttoned her uniform.

The scene passed from one phase to the next with great rapidity. The roaring of the woman on the bed died away rather abruptly—which was explained by the woman with the hypodermic syringe going away from the trolley; next, this same white-aproned woman was standing by the side of the doctor, who was engaged in administering penicillin, and dressing the wound of the recumbent woman. While this was still being done, five newcomers entered the cell; two stretcher-bearers, a police sergeant and a police officer were on either side of the girl who had seemed to be in flight when Pullman first became aware of her. It was now a cell full of silent people, each knowing what to do.

The last flash of the revolting scene was the sudden disinterestment of Dr Hachilah, his coming up to Pullman and drawing him outside the cell. In the doorway he met a man just arriving; they exchanged a few harsh sentences.

"That is all over," he said.

"Is it?" inquired Pullman.

"As far as I am concerned," the Doctor answered.

The Doctor seemed to be anxious to get away from the figure on the floor as soon as possible, and made for the stair-head, muttering "Let us see what is happening downstairs."

Dr Hachilah spoke no more while they were descending the stairs. Then they emerged in a place of bustle, which bore a close resemblance to the floor they had just left. The first thing that obtruded itself upon the eye was a man with a large

bearded head lying on a stretcher. He was obviously under the influence of a drug. As Pullman was standing in admiration of the noble architecture of this ageing head, he noticed that Hachilah was in conversation with one of the two men apparently responsible for the stretcher. He came over to him, and nodding towards the man in the stretcher told Pullman who he was. "A great Sinner. He was a German General Officer. During the war his sins had startled everyone except the Germans. They were German sins. For several months he has received punishment here. Now they are taking him outside, in a small amphitheatre, where this hero is to be burnt alive. He is steeped in sin, he deserves that fate. We will go down and watch this expiation. I shall look forward to watching this un-Christian monster shrivel up, like over-toasted bread, blacken and curl up."

He looked at the man on the stretcher carefully, feature by feature. Pullman looked as well; and beneath the gay moustache of the German General he saw the tongue moving up and down over the lips, which must have been very dry. The head did not move, only the tongue, and, occasionally, the finely moulded eyelids.

"Does he know where he is going," Pullman inquired.

"No," said Hachilah, "unless he has guessed." Several men arrived—doctors, Pullman supposed. The stretcher was lifted up, and the party moved off. Hachilah took Pullman by the arm, and they stepped off briskly in the opposite direction. The Doctor might look forward to seeing this noble-looking old Sinner shrivelled up, like a piece of scorched bread—that was all right, the Doctor spent his life occupied in this way. But *he* was beginning to experience nausea. What was the idea in asking him to assist at this terrible execution? And *why* had Dr Hachilah gripped his arm?

They had taken a short cut; as they moved nearer to the place of fire, down lifts and along corridors, and then a covered gallery out of doors, he availed himself more and more of the Doctor's support. He remembered how Dante, during his visit to the Infernal regions, frequently availed himself of the motherly care of Virgil, who would at times even pick him up protectively, and nurse him in his bosom. At this point, he decided, Hachilah might play the motherly part. He felt feeble, and indeed drooping, worn out and

wanting in that manly will which constituted him a Homeric figure in the eyes of Satters. At one point there was a long piece of obsolete machinery which Hachilah wanted to cross, rather than to walk around. Very well, said Pullman to himself: but for exploits of that kind, he had not the requisite fiery interest in the expedition they were making: he surrendered himself, collapsing into the arms of Hachilah, and making it plain that the passage of the mechanical obstruction was not within the power of so fatigued a man. He was willingly supported by the enthusiastic Doctor, who eventually pulled and pushed him—and once or twice lifted him—over the horrid machinery. They sank upon the ground together at the other side. Pullman propped himself up against Hachilah, murmuring, "A stiff pull and a long pull."

The Doctor produced a flask, detached the metal cup, poured a solid shot, and handed it to his protégé and patient. It was rum, and Pullman swallowed it immediately.

This made a great difference in his attitude. He flung off Hachilah, and asked with a stammer, "Shall we go?"

In a few minutes it seemed they were standing in front of a circular metal building, almost as large as a gas tank. They found the entrance and, with the help of the rum, faced the great heat within, climbing with muted displays of toughness. They reached the two lines of seats near the roof. Here an icy draught, in the midst of which they sat, made it difficult for them to appreciate what was being enacted in the centre of the building. First, down below, as it were in the well of the circus, was a fiery grill, circular in shape, about forty-five yards in diameter. Red hot, crackling forms, assembled like the figures in an abstract painting, was all one saw, but this gigantic grill was made possible by furnaces underneath. The stoking of these (which Pullman felt he could dimly hear) must have been an almost superhuman task.

The rum enabled Pullman to survey this diabolic contrivance, as if he were not himself flesh and blood. The Doctor looked at him with approval.

"You look cool. Good man!" he smiled. "Good show!"

But high up, over this grill, extended an aerial metal inverted rail, and cables hung from it almost touching the grill. Pullman saw at once the road that was to be taken by the big German military Sinner. And within a few minutes some-

thing like a sled upside-down made its appearance in the roof, at one end of the inverted track. In the inverted iron sled was a strapped down, naked figure—emaciated limbs and torso making the large bearded head, surmounted by a heavy mass of hair, more marked.

The sled hovered slowly for a little, and then began to glide down towards the bed of fire, swinging slightly upon a heavy cable. It approached slowly, until it was a matter of ten feet from the blazing surface. There it remained. It was probably five minutes before it began gradually to ascend to the other side of the roof.

"His eyes will have been burnt out of his head," Hachilah said, "and his lips must have dropped into the fire. I believe I saw the skin dropping."

Pullman drew back and away from Hachilah. To bring him here to this savage spectacle was one thing, but to expect him to share the reactions of Punishment Officials and doctors of medicine was another. Soon he would be telling him how the dental plates melt almost at once, in the prisoners' mouths, and other such attractive morsels.

Pullman had none of the sensations he had anticipated. The Doctor's flask contained rum of a high alcoholic percentage, but all that was not the only cause of his relative detachment. In so large a place, curious mechanical accessories of this atrocious kind emasculated the horror: the darkened atmosphere, the absence of sound (no cry came from the victim) gave it much more the effect of an operation than of an execution. A very odd, upside-down operation.

He remained with his eyes upon the ceiling—a position that made it plain that the delights of the execution were not for him. Would the Doctor have come to see it by himself? No: it was for Pullman, in a sense, that this was happening. The Doctor had taken a great deal of trouble—the visitor was not behaving as was expected of him. He was on the point of bringing his study of the ceiling to an end, when Hachilah seized him by the arm.

"There he goes! They have dropped him on the fire. In ten minutes there will be nothing there. The incineration is very rapid."

Pullman carried his eyes downwards to the red-hot surface, and on it a quite lifeless body lay, aflame a little at the sides.

"In ten minutes the Sinner will be totally destroyed?" Pullman inquired.

Hachilah did not answer, his eyes were greedily fixed upon the slowly dissolving object. Pullman revised his estimate of the unlikelihood of this man coming here *by himself*. It was a spectacle that affected him very deeply.

A new Hachilah was glaring at him in the foreground of his consciousness. He imagined Dr Hachilah at a conference where it was being decided whether to destroy a man by fire or not. He could see him shifting excitedly about on his chair, his fiery eyes feasting upon the living flesh of the man for whom frying seemed practically certain. He could imagine, too, how the victim felt sitting there, and his eyes suddenly resting upon the man-eating eyes of Hachilah. He felt, the length of his spine, and down to the soles of his feet, what the man would feel for whom life was in the balance.

He was electrified by this new disquiet. The "House of Fire", as it was called, he had not found a stimulating horror. Drugged by the heat of this burning-centre, and by physical fatigue, he had been conscious of the face of his companion very little. He came to his senses—he threw off the paralysis.

He made no movement—he schooled his face not to reveal what had been going on in his mind, or how he had conquered his torpor. On the other hand he did not allow his mind to get to work upon his startling discovery or what bearing it had upon the lord Sammael (such as why was he sent to this particular man). He knew that at any hideous moment he might be talking to this man-eater again, Hachilah must not read in his eyes that he had detected anything. Pullman must again invite the motherly care of this blood-thirsty Doctor (after the manner of Dante with Virgil). He must act the innocent.

They stood outside the madly-hot building containing the pool of fire (from which the men of the Punishment Service received the kick of kicks, after months of playing with their victims). As between himself and the man-eating Doctor, would the time come for him to be strapped on the upside-down sled? He asked himself that, as they stood together, pausing for a moment to inhale the pleasant atmosphere of every day.

Pullman jumped, as Hachilah took him by the arm and said, "Now let us go to my office and have a cup of tea."

He was not able to reply. He allowed himself to be led by the arm, and in silence, to the main road, not far from the entrance to the punishment block, or, colloquially, Dis. They crossed the road, and made their way to the group of buildings where the Doctor's office was situated. There appeared to be some excitement around the door of the hospital, out of which a hooded stretcher was being taken to a waiting ambulance. Hachilah led the way into the next building, and when they reached his office the Doctor flung himself into a big club-chair, waving to Pullman to be seated, and ringing a bell at his side.

"That has not occupied so much time, but I can understand what is a routine for me must have taken it out of you," Hachilah regarded Pullman in a civilised and amiable way.

"If one is not hardened to such sights they are emotionally exhausting. To see Paolo and Francesca caused Dante to break down. I am justified, I suppose..." Pullman said, without finishing.

"My dear fellow," the Doctor protested. "You saw a murder and an execution without turning a hair!"

"Which was the murder?" Pullman inquired.

"Oh that was the young woman doctor," said Hachilah. "I should not think she will recover. A deep stab in the left breast, and so on."

"Oh." Pullman looked surprised. "I did not know that was murder."

Some tea was brought in. "Not the right time of the day," said the Doctor apologetically. "But tea is a better refresher than anything I know."

For a few minutes they drank in silence. Then the Doctor spoke.

"You must come again. I will show you round more thoroughly."

"Thank you," said the visitor.

"The lord Sammael likes you, Pullman. He does not wish to impose anything on you. But as you are where Hell is (was how he put it), he thought you might care to have a look. As a writer, he thought that our version of the 'Inferno' might interest you."

"He was right. I found it tremendously interesting. Please say how grateful I am for being given the opportunity to

see—to see your curious display. I thought your Paolo and Francesca was a good critique of Dante."

Dr Hachilah laughed, evidently pleased. "I am glad, Mr Pullman, that you approved of what you call my criticism."

It seemed to Pullman that Dr Hachilah's *pleasure* was decisive. That was obviously what he felt, and it could only mean one thing: namely, that he wanted Pullman to tell the lord Sammael that what he had seen interested him, and that it was intelligently contrived by the person entrusted with the job, namely, Dr Hachilah.

It was quite lightheartedly that Pullman went down to the waiting car, accompanied almost obsequiously by the man-eating Doctor.

# X

THE SITUATION HAD APPEARED CLEARER—if what was said and done was to be treated as normal—might be taken as corresponding to fact—as being simple, and not intricate. His shock at discovering that Hachilah possessed the face af a man-eater was very natural, but after all it was a fact which *need not* have any bearing upon his visit to Dis. What had transpired afterwards, in his office, was of far greater significance.

Upon arriving in their apartment, on an impulse ensuing from his optimism, Pullman, with an air suggestive of some great disclosure, made his way to Satters' bedroom. Satters' bedroom, they now had decided, was the safest place to talk in, and Pullman's immediate move into what had become a conference chamber could only mean that some high confidence was contemplated.

But the moment he found himself confronted with Satters' face, like a frowning potato, furrowed with weeks of scepticism, he saw that it would be no use. Satters was degenerating into something like a suspicious old woman. It was out of the question to attempt to make him understand anything except a stamped and sealed document. He could hear himself saying, "Doctor Hachilah told me that the lord Sammael liked me very much." He would be confronted by the blank face of Satters, and a "well what of it' look. No, there could be nothing of that sort. He really had nothing new to tell him.

So Pullman gave a jocular account of the sufferings of the Sinners, and so closed what was to have been a conference. Satters looked a little puzzled. But it was not the first time that he had had cause to decide that his chief was a very enigmatic person.

As usual Pullman was confronted with the problem of how to amuse his discontented follower. Mark lent them a child's game called Sizzle-Wizzle (or that was the nearest thing they were able to get to the native word inscribed upon the box). It was *so* childish that it gave Pullman a pain behind the ears, and his nose began to bleed at the end of an hour. Yet, until they left these apartments, should any silence extend for

more than ten minutes or so, Satters would spring up, and shout Sizzle-Wizzle. However, this stupefying game was played for the rest of the day. Pullman's morning and nightly prayers rang with the word Sizzle-Wizzle.

On the third day, shortly after Sizzle-Wizzle had begun, Pullman put his hat on and left the house. Satters attempted to go with him, but he ran at top speed down the stairs, shouting, "Go away. I must be alone. Shall only be ten minutes." He walked slowly to the main road, where he came face to face with a member of the police force, who tried to have a talk with him, but, failing to do so, attempted to arrest him. Pullman took to flight, the police in pursuit: the latter slowed down because of his arms. Pullman disappeared into the hotel: almost at once the man in pursuit, making a great deal of noise, was about to mount the stairs with aggressive intent (for he had heard Pullman ascending them when he first arrived), but Mark entered. After a great deal of shouting, after Pullman had been fetched down and exhaustively interrogated, the law withdrew with many menaces. Pullman, once more back in their apartment, sank into a chair. Satters regarded him ironically, then he exclaimed sturdily, "Never mind! Let's have a game of Sizzle-Wizzle."

They somehow or other got through seven days, when Pullman received a summons to the house of the lord Sammael, about twelve o'clock in the morning. The car shortly afterwards made its appearance, he dragged himself away from Satters, and in at most ten minutes he was at the lord Sammael's house, being greeted by the master dressed in a most becoming smock. Smiling he led him into the same sitting-room in which the child still lay in the basket.

"All the morning I have been going from farm to farm," Sammael told him. "I feel quite bucolic."

Pullman laughed decorously at the idea of Lucifer examining short-horned cattle and scratsching the ear of the deeply-cooing sow.

"For my part," he said, "I have been playing Sizzle-Wizzle endlessly."

"Sizzle-Wizzle?"

"A child's game lent us by Mark. I have a child, you know—a very backward sixteen—who takes a great deal of entertaining."

"I must really apologise," and Sammael frowned self-reproachfully. "For the past week a quite unexpected, unheralded food problem demanded my attention. Farming is not a subject I am very good at. I labour to understand, but agricultural troubles take me twice as long as any other to get to the bottom of." He got up. "I am ravenous. Will you have lunch with me—very simple you know, but . . ."

Had this been the Earth, Pullman would have been about to sit down to lunch with the King of the Earth. He who sups with the King of the Earth is on the road to greatly improving his position. But what did anything mean *here?*

However, in the sparkling dining-room, the linen stiff and white, a shining parquet floor, soft white rugs, and a live Englishman as butler in a white drill uniform (of forty odd and properly whiskered), quite altered the outlook. This *was* a serious lunch, in the social sense. The English butler said, "Would you like *Toast Melba,* sir?" Things began to feel like the Earth—even like the Anglo-Saxon Earth.

And what the lord Sammael shortly was to say confirmed him in the belief that he had reached solid Earth at last.

But first Sammael referred to his visit to Dis. He told him that Dr Hachilah had informed him how they had examined the vignettes. Also he had learned of their subsequent visit to the Fire-House or Incinerator.

Sammael spoke of Hachilah. "He is not from these parts, as you may have noticed. The people of Miphkad are—how should I say? They are *provincial*—there is something oddly limited about them. Now, Hachilah was born in Europe, even, he studied in England. He arrived here in the usual way; but he is an extremely skilful doctor, and I rather liked him. So we took him on, and he has done very well. He only has one fault; he loses his temper in dealing with a troublesome Sinner. The Doctor told me that you had preferred *his* Paolo and Francesca to that of Dante!"

Pullman could see that Sammael was proud of his prowess, in wittily arranging the Sinners who came under his care.

Consequently Pullman discussed the exhibits he had been shown. He said how sentimental he considered Dante's *lovers-in-the-storm;* and how Hachilah had produced a more realistic pair of divorcés than the Italian—who was, of course maudlin about the sexual passion anyway. He was almost as well

known for his lovesickness as for his infernal journey. And what a face he had!

Sammael laughed a great deal at this point. He had always thought that about Dante's face himself. And as to the cult of Beatrice, they rolled about at the thought of Beatrice.

"There is a very popular academic picture—it is the Anglo-Saxon's visual conception of Dante. It shows Dante—small, black, and intense—encountering Beatrice in the streets of Florence."

"Yes," Sammael smiled, for he appeared to enjoy discussing Dante. "I cannot feel that he was one of the world's great ones."

"I read Dante rather late," Pullman continued, "when I was able to use my intellect, without interference by the youthful emotions, hero-worship and the rest. No one can question the grandeur of his verse. But the age was uncongenial, and he was his age. He had developed this personal mariolatry. Substituting Beatrice for Mary. Then he has a mother-fixation, as it would be called. He summons Virgil from the dead in order to act on his journey into Hell as his big maternal Nanny. He entrusts himself to Virgil as though he were a rather jumpy little subject. One is frequently surprised to find Dante shrinking up against the mother-poet, Virgil: and in some cases Virgil lifts him up and shelters him in his bosom. I do not suggest he should have moved among the shades with crânerie or lack of courteous pity for their misfortune, but he need not have come shrinking among them, never far from his mother's apron-strings.

"A thing of minor importance, perhaps; but when he met his fellow Florentines he was not suitably detached, and it was a good thing he had someone there to look after him.—A contemporary Italian explains these things as a result of Dante's never having had a father. But what a fatherless child misses in such a case is not the protection of the maternal nurse, but the authority of the hero belonging to the extrovert masculine side of life. But since Dante was a mother's boy one feels that had he had his Mary, she would have had to do a good deal of cuddling and petting of her little man."

This table-talk of Pullman's was greatly appreciated by his host, it was plain. And it was not long after this that Sammael made a proposal which revolutionized Pullman's status,

changing his life from a position of suspense, subservience, and, at times, terror, to a privileged existence.

Ever since he had arrived that morning, influences had been reaching him, assuring him that the will-to-good was present in the unseen which was all around him. He was conscious all the time of this great body, surmounted by the wing-carrying shoulders, of something primitive that never left the eyes which had seen the universe in its first days, in fact of all that was elemental about this man, dressed and mannered like himself, yet so dissimilar as to startle one the moment one began to think about it.

But he had the sense, continually, that this great supernatural creature desired contact on the human level. There was an alarming paradox in Sammael's conversing with him as though their training had been the same. He seemed to hold nothing back, his eyes appeared to be throwing open all that was within, which was absurd, but, on the other hand, if a cat had looked at him with a disarming friendliness, Pullman would have accepted the animal at its own valuation. He found himself, in short, lying down with the lion, closing his eyes (perforce) to what reason taught him to see.

Another thing he knew he had to do was to accept any view of things that Sammael wished him to; just as, in driving through the landscape of Hell, he had shut his eyes to the reality. This starched English table-cloth, and the English butler, were things of the same idea. He gladly accepted these accessories of English life as being precisely what he would have expected in Hell.

What, however, had caused him to feel that he was playing his part in a dangerous comedy, began to be dissipated when Sammael had opened his mind to him a little. Sammael's thoughts, indeed, were even more surprising than other circumstances of a purely external kind.

"Go back," he said, "go back to the beginning of things. It was a great prejudice against Man which placed me in the spotlight in those early times." Sammael hurled his shoulders round as if he were changing direction in full flight, and he threw up his eyes in the way the Padishah had the habit of doing. "To simplify the position, my dear Pullman—from the standpoint of the angels, that small scale, short-lived imitation, Man, was nothing short of a scandal. It was as if he

had wanted to insult us. My original attitude regarding Adam and his seed (about which I quarrelled irretrievably with that other angel, known to man as 'God') has now, to say the least, become out of date. I retain to the full my original dislike of Woman—that nastiest innovation of my colleague 'God the Father'—the nursery, the procreative side of Man. But it is a long time since the beginning of things: Man is developing. It seems to me that Man is on the eve of modifying his existence. To take only that, he will soon be living much longer: and in extending his life's span in that way, he would necessarily be making profound changes—for instance, the marriage-machinery would undergo a radical alteration. In the end, in intellect and other things, he might outstrip the angels, who (though for heaven's sake let this be off the record) are not, on the whole, remarkable for their intelligence—in spite of their great size and of the absurdly long time that they have lived!"

The curtained window of the dining-room had for outlook the lawn of the lord Sammael's neighbour. At that moment an enormous yellow dog appeared in the middle of the lawn, and then an equally large black dog came round from behind the house beyond the lawn, and sprang at the throat of the yellow dog. The explosive roar of canine battle on such a scale was terrific. Lastly, a very large man came out of the small house, and engaged in the battle. The yellow dog vanished, but the big man had a bad bite on his wrist, and Sammael rushed to the side door.

"Take that bite to the cold tap, Ben. I will telephone the doctor."

Next, there was the telephone, outside the dining-room door. After a few laconic sentences, the receiver crashed back into its cradle, and Sammael returned. Ordering the English butler to bring the next course, he discharged a resigned puff, and then laughed towards his guest.

"I apologise for that interruption, but it was *á propos*, you see. That fellow next door to me is an angel. He has a heart of gold. But his intelligence is about the equal of that big dog. I like both of them. But I could no more carry on a conversation with him on the subject of Dante than I could with his black dog. Now there are a great many angels like Ben. They are nice, like that big dog. In fact, there are very few angels

indeed who have a developed intellect. That I regard as very serious. God (let us call him that) is a very intelligent angel. That is an important fact. He is, always has been, exceptionally intelligent. But intelligence is as rare supernaturally as it is naturally. You understand?"

"Yes, sir. I hope I do." Pullman looked very serious indeed. He was in rather an awkward position—as if a man had said to him, for instance, "My wife is the dullest fool in this street, and that is saying something. Sometimes she talks such nonsense that I feel my head is turning round."—Pullman was embarrassed in the same way as a man would be if someone launched out in the way I have just illustrated. It would be impossible to agree with him, however much he might, in fact, do so; the more he went on about her, the more dismayed the other man would become. So it was that Pullman felt, if his host denounced the whole of Angeltown as a lot of morons, he perhaps should protest, "Oh I say, sir! . . ." This would have been the thing to do if he had been speaking to a man. But this was a god.

Pullman began attacking the centre of his face, digging his fingers into his eyes and pulling his nose. Then Sammael followed suit; he rubbed his face in his hands, and, as it was a larger area than Pullman's, he did leave a sort of track all over his splendidly handsome features. Pullman was astonished at this spectacle, at finding himself imitated.

"I must give up epitomizing all these things about myself, my past, which cannot interest you," and Sammael yawned, as if to express his boredom with the thoughts of anyone who was not interested in himself. Then he shook himself.

"Let me get down to the plan I have been engaged on to settle you and your young friend as comfortably as may be in Angeltown—for you could not live down *there.*" He shrugged in the direction of Matapolis. "For some time now I have been—yes, literally, collecting men of parts. I have physicists, two historians, a mathematician. On the other side of Angeltown I have built a fairly large house. This is a beginning only—the house stands in a small park and it is quite a nice place. This is the nucleus, all by itself, of a university. You understand that we could not send angels down to that funny little university in Matapolis. They might learn something there, but it would be impossible for them to associate with

the sons of the staff at Dis. I have to invent a new university, and it must be done with European professors, not with people like that wretched little man who was Bailiff in Third City."

He gave a kind of laughing snort, and it was not difficult for Pullman to see what he felt regarding that dignitary.

"I wish I had a small number of angels to act as professors, but unfortunately there are none of them who have ever been taught anything. I need do no more explaining for the moment. Would you like to live in a quite comfortable flat in the house of which I have spoken? I will take you along there and show it to you. You will receive a salary, a monthly stipend equivalent to one thousand pounds sterling a year, and half that sum for your friend. Placed as you are, you will of course say *yes*. But my car is at the gate; let us go there at once."

Pullman almost reeled with delight. He said, without any exaggeration, that it sounded divine: it was no use to express his gratitude, but he began to do so, as he followed Sammael out of the dining-room, his view of everything about him transformed; a dense load of misery, beneath which he had been living since his arrival in this place, had been removed with great suddenness. It was literally as much as he could do to talk straight.

## XI

LEADING HIM OUT of the front door, and, with an airy step, making his way down the paved walk bisecting the grass plot in front of the house, it was, for Pullman, a new personage who swung along in front of him. A very becoming headdress, reminiscent of Highland caps and bonnets, was the first innovation, fixed gallantly among the lord Sammael's flowing black hair; there was the mauve-blue smock, most wonderfully tailored, and there was a short stick in his hand, with which he tapped his leg as he walked, from below the handle of which hung a tasselled cord of hunter green. It was impossible to see in this "fashionable" figure, from the shining pages of an American magazine, in a cool and immaculately neat colour block, His Majesty the Devil. But this was not all. Before the gate stood a Cadillac—or it was so like that, that it must have been a diabolic imitation. This car was expensively elegant, gaily upholstered in a soft spongy leather, of a delicate egg-blue. Sitting in the billowing leather, gliding along as if upon air, in front a chauffeur designed by Dior, or the equivalent in a masculine *couture*, Pullman said to himself, "This is the dream of a very snobbish little boy."—But the great lord of Hell knew what he was doing.

"This is called דרך מלאכים. To anglicise it, Derek Malakin, or Angelsway," the King of Angels told him. "The whole of this place here is known as Angeltown: and this very wide thoroughfare, going down the centre of it, is Angelsway. I will be your guide."

The road was indeed abnormally wide. The houses were fairly uniform in size but all were in ultra-modern design of very different shapes; the predominating colour was a dazzling white, but the roofs, the doors, or the balconies, might be anything at all, provided it was gay enough—a light grey approaching rose, strips of startling blue or green, or such colour as war designed to correspond with the shape. Pullman had never seen such a display of fearless modernity. It was as if Lloyd Wright had died and had in error turned up in Hell,

but that his architecture had appealed to the diabolic mind and he had started building a new world to house the angels. The shapes which presented themselves to Pullman's receptive mind were numberless. Some of these houses were like an enormous box with barrels collected on top of it. Others were like bodies of aeroplanes stacked on top of one another; and there were yet others which were like two halves of an egg stood on end and hinged together, with thick pipes (two or three) connecting them with the ground, and a small whole egg lying between them. Some looked like houses standing on their heads, and some looked like boats which had collided.

The angelic householder was everywhere. He appeared in the most unexpected places. He would be seen sliding down a transparent pipe; or he would come down from his roof on a flight of stairs, the front door being beside the chimney pot. They were big swarthy men, the black angels. They all waved to Sammael. There was a number of cars, climbed in and out of by huge men: gardening proceeded, and tennis was everywhere. The small race was there too, in good numbers, with baskets going to market, with hoses turned upon the houses to keep the shining appearance: cleaning or repairing cars, beating rugs. The Angelsway itself was extremely wide and after a mile or two, mounting slightly all the way, they came to a huge sports park, with long Club houses, a miniature lake. This park was circular in shape, and at its periphery was a racing track.

"Much sport," commented Pullman.

"Too much," Sammael responded. "But it keeps us all athletic and in good shape. We are essentially a military organisation."

"But who have you to fight?" inquired Pullman.

"Who can say? Thirty thousand picked men are a good thing to have."

Pullman did not yet know how freely he might speak. But, after an interval, he said modestly, "On Earth the muscular strength of Man decreases in importance. If a General has ten brigades of guards, he knows that it is the number and quality of the machine, not the man, that really matters."

Sammael looked at him.

"We will have to attend to the machines, I have no love for the machine. But . . ."

Another mile or two, and they reached a large enclosed market. There was a big parking space for country carts, and city traffic. All this traffic used a side road. Pullman could see great heaps of fruit and vegetables for these hungry giants, so many thousands. He did not wish to ask, but he thought that it must have been rather over a mile beyond the markets before they reached the confines of Angeltown. The journey had been gently hilly, but now it seemed the road flattened out. The car turned off to the left. It was wooded: but soon they turned off again, this time to the right. Sammael told him this was the park. It was not very far before the house came into sight: it was a large private house, at every floor surrounded completely by balconies.

As they alighted a small man came down the steps which led to the front door. Sammael greeted him in a very friendly way.

"This is Mr Henry Meissner, an American historian," Sammael announced to Pullman.

Mr Meissner was a German-American: Pullman found, when he got near to him, that he was the same size as himself. Everybody here, in contrast to the giant race (accepted as the norm), was naturally thought of as small.

Socially, Pullman could not divest himself of a provincial stiffness. Sammael noticed, with amusement, that he bore himself a little stiffly and arrogantly with other Earth-men.

There were altogether eight flats, all occupied. It was a house of four storeys, and the flat reserved for Satters and himself was on the third floor, to the left of the front door. They went up to it at once in a self-operating lift. He was enchanted with the beautiful peasant-furniture, the rich rugs, the brand-new bedclothes, the bookshelves, desks; an American kitchen, fully stocked with everything for cooking, with piles of plates; and he even noticed a refrigerator, and a vacuum cleaner, and (very important) a hot and cold shower. He was overjoyed. To be removed from Earth, given no status, living perilously from hand-to-mouth, had been a fearful strain. Here, he felt, was a resting-place perhaps for a long time: a far longer time that he had been offered or had any prospect of enjoying in Third City. To know how to thank is the last thing a man knows, if ever. The ruling class of England knew how to thank in all situations; and today a

very well-educated Frenchman would possess such techniques of course. But Pullman belonged to the thankless majority. His eyes had a suggestion of moisture as he turned towards the lord Sammael, and he said, "How can I thank you? I am very deeply indebted to you, sir."

On the return journey Sammael told him a little more about Angeltown and its inhabitants. He explained the reason for the width of the roads; at the side of the great settlement was a sort of parade ground, or assembly place for the angels. This was one hundred miles in diameter. They had had a great conference, about a quarter of a century before, and had decided to live ordinary mansized lives; here Angeltown military efficiency had to be sacrificed.

"When we wish to resume our angelic stature, the space, one hundred miles in diameter, for thirty thousand members is absurdly small. Consequently we are obliged to assemble one thousand at a time. These abnormally wide roads were built in order to accommodate the prodigious feet of angels, when they reassume the full angelic stature. When my natural size," the lord Sammael smilingly explained, "my hand is so enormous that I could pick up a half-dozen cars like this."

"Which size do you prefer to be?" inquired Pullman.

"Well, it is not only a question of *size*, as you may understand—or you may not. Anyway, it is to become another being when we resume the angelic form. It is not merely that we are a hundred times as big, we become another creature—with its appropriate thoughts, sensations. When, for instance, we assemble once a week, we fly away into the sky, many miles above the ground (we can do that). Last Wednesday I flew off by myself, covering about a thousand miles. I felt and thought differently from what I do now. All the others agree that they become entirely different people—though of course, most of them do not reason about it.—More and more I personally feel that we shall have to choose, in the end, which we are going to be: a man-sized being, or an angel-sized being. And I know which size I would vote for. The man-size is the one of my choice. This is a most revolutionary idea: a permanent change to human stature might (though I have no means of verifying this) modify many things, such as the length of our lives. That would mean that as a race we should gradually die out. How some of my brother angels would like

that idea I cannot say. Then you see to what such a change might lead: namely, the introduction of the female into the picture. Wherever you have the human scale you must perhaps have women: simply in order to provide for man's continuance."

"I wonder," interjected Pullman.

"That is one of the things that has to be investigated. From this conversation you will see that I am at a very critical juncture. I am quite willing, if not to believe, at least to consider whether the day of the Angel is past. Man (with renewed longevity and other modifications) may now be a preferable form of being. If I call a conference of angels and advance this theory, they may, in the mass, be so incensed with me that they will destroy me." The lord Sammael laughed uproariously. All the time, while he had been speaking, he had been answering the greetings of fellow angels, to left and to right.

"Would it not perhaps be better, sir, to soften them up first by involving them more deeply in human modes. Here they are already getting used to a life in no way different from the kind of life lived by film-stars at Hollywood. Then you could begin by sounding out your closest friends. It would seem, from what you say, sir, that caution and diplomacy are called for."

"I can see that you are like the wily Ulysses," Sammael laughingly remarked.

"I should not like to see my great patron executed as an advocate of Humanism. Only consider what my position would be like."

The lord Sammael laughed almost boisterously, and slapped Pullman lightly on the thigh. "I can see that you will be a Machiavellian counsellor. But you do see, my friend, how all these plans, and all these feelings of mine have some connection with the house in which I have just installed you. It is all part of the same pattern."

They were now approaching the lord Sammael's house, and a car was at the door with which he was most emotionally familiar. It was the automobile which had always fetched him on his terrifying visits to Dis. He transferred to that sinister vehicle, he waved in return to Sammael's gay salute.

## XII

The car took him, the chauffeur as automatic as ever, to the apartment house of Mark. He did not spend long there; just long enough to give a hearty handshake to Mark, explain what had occurred, pack his few things, and bear away the grudgingly satisfied Satters—who with great difficulty was prevented from carrying off the Sizzle-Wizzle box.

They now collected, at the lord Sammael's, the young man lent them to act as house-boy. He spoke English very well and appeared to be a sensible fellow. Proceeding down Angelsway, the sight of all the enormous dark men, the big, loudly barking dogs, and still more the amazing houses, impressed Satters deeply; and, as they passed through the sports-park, the shouts, the bangs, and a glimpse of these monsters with their whirling tennis-rackets, shooting balls up and down at one another at super-human speed, caused him to say, "Oh boy, can we play some tennis, do you think, Pulley?"

As regards the flat, when they reached it, Satters allowed himself to display a half suspicious gratification.

A note had been handed to Pullman en route. Now he opened it, sitting in an unspeakably comfortable chair. He learned that Borp had lived all his life in Third City. Sammael proposed to lend him Borp until they could find an English or French house-boy of their own. Also Sammael informed him that one of the senior inhabitants of Haus Europa (as he had named it) would pay them a short visit of welcome. His name was Dr Heinrich Schlank.

Pullman and Satters, as though at the end of some tremendously strenuous day's work, sat silent, as if drained of all vitality. There was a knock on the door leading to the kitchen, and Borp appeared with a tray.

"Here is a cup of tea for you two young gentlemen," he said.

It was the best tea they had had since they had died.

At a quarter to six the knock foreshadowed by the lord Sammael occurred, and the physicist, Dr Schlank, made his appearance. It was a formal welcoming call. His English was a little halting, so Pullman, who had lived for five years in Basle, told him, in German, that he could speak that language

if he found it easier, and Schlank at once availed himself of this invitation. Satters received a good deal of attention in broken English, for, like everyone else, Dr Schlank supposed Satters to be the homosexual appendage of the world-famous author.

Dr Heinrich Schlank was slightly taller and much heavier than Pullman. His silhouette flatly contradicted his name. He was not a man capable of social relaxation, and not exactly the man to select to welcome newcomers, and Pullman was a stilted man, so it might have been anything but an expansive meeting.

With Schlank it seemed as if the atmosphere were a cave, within which he usually dwelt, and out of which he came in encountering another person. The face was rather tight, the texture too much like a fish to be quite agreeable. His grey eyes were very cold, but, when he lit up his face socially with a smile, it was even insinuating, unusually pleasant. It was, perhaps, negative pleasantness because there was in it nothing anti-human, not because of the presence of anything pro-human.

As a sociologist, Pullman's interests were all human, and opposite material to that of the physicist. He was a highly analytical historian of men and women, and a critic of human action. He had been a great student of Freud and Jung. He was acquainted with the work of Dr Schlank, which he admired. So the meeting was harmonious.

Dr Schlank recognized that Pullman was a very intelligent man. Pullman liked physicists.

The other people living in the house were as follows. To start with, there was Dr Meissner. He occupied a garden-apartment at the back. Then there was the Rumanian mathematician. Dr Schlank was sceptical about Dr Maniu.

"What kind of mathematician is he? I do not know. I have never seen his mathematics. I must wait until he shows me some."

So Maniu was probably a mistake of Sammael's. The two historians were, first, the American Dr Woodward, a routine teacher of American History, who had written a number of books for college use; second, a young Italian, Antonio Mateozzi. He had murdered his wife, which, of course, had recommended him to the lord Sammael. He had committed

suicide afterwards, which brought him rapidly to the Haus Europa. Mateozzi had written a number of articles and essays, and one book on *Caesars through the Ages*. He objected very strongly to Caesars unhistorically, for this was to ignore the time factor. Pullman said that Mateozzi would have assassinated Mussolini if he had not killed his wife.

Of the other two inhabitants, there was Pavel Horovitz, a Pole, who had lived half his life in the U.S. Dr Schlank said he was a good bio-chemist, but extraordinarily conceited. The remaining inhabitant of Haus Europa was an English art-historian, as it is now euphemistically called. He had been knighted, for he had been a very rich man. His small red face displeased Pullman. His history of the Italian Renaissance was, he felt sure, stuck together rather than written: stuck together from a mass of opinions put out by other men. This purely art authority approached him with patronage, and was received with a disdainful reserve. The art-historian left Pullman with an expression as though he had smelled a bad smell.

Sir Aubrey Carter was the only inmate of Haus Europa that Pullman would rather not have had on the *palier*. The only one he took seriously was Dr Heinrich Schlank. Among them there was no possible friend.

The market was about a mile away: there were also a number of shops. They asked Borp if he would mind their accompanying him to market. They explained the difficulties in connection with taking a walk. He saw how that might be but did not think that in Angeltown they would be interfered with. He had no car, so they walked with him to the market-place. To give Borp a face, all that is necessary to say is that his original countenance had been replaced by a smile of some magnitude, but which one felt concealed nothing unsuitable. He had a lot to say about Third City, and Satters discussed, as one having inside information, the whole district of Fifth Piazza.

At last they reached the market-place. Almost immediately a huge angel asked Borp who they were—but quite genially. On learning that they were English, he addressed them in that language.

"I learn English," he said smiling. "You understand I teach myself."

Borp explained the difficulties experienced by them in trying to take a walk. After a little it was arranged that the stranger should take them to a book-shop. Borp explained to Pullman that the lord Sammael had bought and stocked this large store. The angel was listening, and he interrupted to say, "Yes. Yes. Sammael. He make shop."

It was arranged that Borp would come to the shop as soon as his marketing was done.

The angel wrote on a piece of paper KOKABIEL, pointing to himself.

"Your name?" Pullman inquired.

"My name," he answered.

The book-shop was a very large one, full of angel customers. Kokabiel met several friends there, and he introduced them to Pullman. One of them spoke English with a certain fluency. His name was Gatiel. He and Kokabiel discussed *Hamlet* and *Timon*. They seemed very quick, but as yet understood very little. The main difficulty was the kind of life lived by the characters in the books—the Earth-life.

The books were classified in languages, and the English section was the largest. Two assistants, both of whom spoke excellent English, were attached exclusively to this section.

Pullman was greatly embarrassed when Satters came up to him, pointing behind him.

"I say, Pulley, look! They have *two* of your books here!"

In spite of a "shut up!" the assistant had heard. He spoke to the other assistant, and they consulted. Then one of them came up to Pullman.

"Excuse me, sir, are you Mr Pullman?"

He was at the moment talking to Gatiel. So that was that; his identity was revealed. Upon the arrival of Borp they all went outside the book-shop. With their house-boy as intermediary, it was explained to the angel more advanced in his English studies where they lived.

Also their house-boy informed the two angels of the part played by the lord Sammael in the founding of Haus Europa. After a little more talk, Gatiel asked if they might visit them at Haus Europa. Pullman said he would be very glad if they would. It was arranged that the two should come at four-thirty the following day.

Strolling back, Borp had something to say about angels in

general. Theoretically, it was a perfect economic democracy, it appeared: or, as Borp explained it, all possessed exactly the same income—except, of course, Sammael, and others who acted as officers of one sort or another. The lord Sammael was "The Chief, like", but had a large office, with hundreds of clerks, was the military leader, and many other things. The houses—in short Angeltown—had been built in the past thirty or forty years, upon the orders of the Committee of Angels, the body which ruled this community. This committee, under the chairmanship of the lord Sammael, sat every week, in Angel Haus, at the other end of the town. "And those angels have judges, too," concluded Borp with some pomp. He evidently regarded them as a queer tribe of giants, who had funny ways; but he respected them. He felt that he was, racially, half-way between Pullman and an angel.

The next day, the angels were punctual. These two vast creatures, reduced to big-man size, moved rather like bears. Pullman now had an opportunity of examining the average angel. Facially they differed considerably. Kobabiel, the one who spoke English less well, had a somewhat heavier face. The other, Gatiel, possessed an oval, with an expression of great gentleness. Olive skinned and with ink-black hair, six inches shorter he might have been a Persian, or would have passed for a very dark Neapolitan, no doubt:—would have passed, unless closely examined, and, more especially, unless looked at in the eyes. A single glance from their eyes would have sufficed to show that they were something entirely different from anything that could be found in Europe or Asia.

The extreme disparity of the angel life in contrast to the human life, was responsible for shaping all the expression-making lineaments in a surprisingly different way. A man who marries and is given in marriage, who buys and sells—who calls his home his castle, all that kind of thing, directs the formation of the face, is responsible for the expression it assumes—just as the "married man" is popularly thought to be very easy to spot. It was the *absence* of all that would normally facilitate such an identification that was so startling about these supernatural men. These were the faces of children who had never lived with men and women—but who had lived in the clouds, since the world began. It was when they quickly

looked up, after their minds had been elsewhere, that one detected the tremendous innocence.

Gatiel had brought a copy of *Ivanhoe* with him. He read a little aloud, at first listened to by Kokabiel with an admirable concentration. Gatiel read surprisingly well. Then came a period during which Gatiel asked for help regarding the subject matter of the book. One inquiry was connected with the French patronymics of many of the characters. Pullman explained how England had been invaded by the Norman French, about a thousand years ago. He cleared up other matters of this kind. He found himself able to converse with Gatiel fairly easily: the angel knew a considerable number of words, was quick in applying his knowledge.

Meanwhile Kokabiel had become deep in conversation with Satters. They sat upon a settee together; and what first drew Pullman's attention was the following dialogue.

"Don't. You tickle. You mustn't tickle, you know."

Kokabiel's hand was fumbling about with Satters' knee.

"What is tickle?" asked Kokabiel.

Satters proceeded to explore, on tickling bent, in the neighbourhood of Kokabiel's armpit. Suddenly the angel started, and gave a cry of amused recognition.

"That is tickle," Satters explained, with some glee.

"Tickle," Kokabiel repeated.

"I tickle! See?" said Satters as he put his hand inside Kokabiel's jacket, Kokabiel laughing and pushing his hand away. "You tickle," Satters continued his lesson, and seizing one of Kokabiel's hands, dragged it down to his knee.

Next, with a cry of "tickle!" Kokabiel put his arms around Satters, and began attempting to locate ticklish spots.

"Here. You jolly well know what tickle means," Satters complained, wriggling and coughing with laughter. He gave a shriek, as Kokabiel pulled off his slippers, and started to tickle the soles of his feet.

"I tickle. I tickle!" roared Kokabiel.

"Yes, you do!" responded Satters breathlessly, as they tumbled about on the settee. "I punch. I punch!"

He hit Kokabiel twice in the chest. There were two thuds, as if a large barrel had been struck.

Kokabiel bodily lifted Satters off the settee into the air. Two vast hands held something like a dynamic toy, all arms

and legs in convulsive movement. Satters' voice could be heard from the midst of the kicking toy-man, "Just to show how strong you are, big brute! Let me down, or I'll kick you in the teeth. Do you hear!"

Gatiel, who could understand the meaning of these threatening words, sprang up, and saying, "Excuse me. Satters, I take you. Come to me!" he snatched Satters out of Kokabiel's enormous hands, and set him down upon a chair.

Frowning towards Kokabiel, Satters clamoured aggressively, "You be careful, you big tough, or you'll get more than you expect."

Pullman shouted at him angrily, however.

"Satters! What the devil do you think you are doing, making this disgusting fuss. I always thought you were sportsmanlike, whatever else you may be. He was only playing with you, you little cissy."

"Playing! Do you call that *playing*, Pulley!"

"Oh I see, Satters," Pullman admonished him. "You are a spoilt darling, are you? I shall warn them not to play with you. You can't stand anything but the gentlest handling."

"Gentle!" protested Satters. "Did not you see him chuck me up in the air? How would you like to be thrown up in the air?"

"Poor little pet! Was that man rough with you then! I shall tell them you are only a little schoolboy. It won't occur again. I shall tell them that you are apt to burst into a flood of tears."

However, Kokabiel coaxed Satters back into a good humour, and soon Pullman was able to hear a peaceful conversation in progress.

"Your hears, your hears."

"No, stupid. These are my ears."

"So you hears with those ears."

"I don't hear with my nose."

"You say? The nose hears?"

"Yes. And I smell with my eyes."

"Yes?" Kokabiel was attempting to smell with his eyes. "No. Mid zee mouse."

"My mouth smells, when I drink a glass of whisky. But I do not smell with my mouth."

Kokabiel looked at him as if he had suddenly dropped into

Chinese. "No, no, no," he said reproachfully. "I go nowhere. I stand still."

"Nonsense, Koko. You sit, you do not stand."

Whether Koko was learning English or not, Pullman felt that Satters was amusing himself.

While Pullman was listening to this, he was providing Gatiel with a key to life in Norman England. Then the angel read a little, applying what Pullman had told him.

They were working peacefully along in this way, the decorum of the party not disturbed by the toy-firebrand, Satters, when the doors opened, and the lord Sammael appeared. Satters was luxuriating in the joys of teaching and shouting at Koko.

"You fathead, open your mouth! Watch me!"

The two angels sprang up, seeming to flatten themselves against the wall, hanging their heads, and keeping their eyes on the ground. Pullman had risen, only Satters remained seated.

"Please do not let me disturb you," Sammael chanted. "An English lesson is in progress I can see ... You have lost no time, Pullman."

The lord Sammael had left the door, and had moved into the centre of the room. He was in riding kit, of the greatest but rather dago elegance.

"I went to the market, sir, yesterday, and this gentleman offered to show me the book-shop. There I met Mr Gatiel ..."

Pullman indicated the angel of that name, but they already knew one another: the lord Sammael went up to the angel, who was frozen with respect, addressing him in angel tongue.

Pullman, observing this encounter, was astonished at the face of the angel as it was lifted to the great archangel, who was speaking to him tenderly, holding one of his hands in his.

Gatiel stood there, like an enormous child, bathing the other's face from his large eyes with an indescribable radiation of love. It was not veneration but love, though more than veneration was there as well. His eyes feasted upon the features of the great one, his lips moving all the time very slightly, as if in prayer. Such golden innocence, never contaminated by the smallest fraction of criticism, Pullman had never seen. In his divinity reading he remembered how the lord Sammael, or more commonly Sataniel, at a later date, had

invariably been accompanied in Heaven by a large escort of angels. This personal following would have eyes of this kind, illuminating their leader with the passion of their love. And then he thought how he had framed a picture in his mind, only some days before, of God commissioning Sataniel to break down the loyalty of Job. Knowing Satan's hatred of man, God knew that this would be carried out with efficiency. He had had a picture of Sammael surrounded by his higher angels, contriving miseries for Job. Incontinence, suggested by one, another suggesting that seeds might be introduced into Job's blood, so that, if he cut his finger, the seeds in contact with the air should develop into malignant spirits.

But meanwhile, with a parting caress, the lord Sammael went across the room to where Kokabiel stood: and the same thing happened as with Gatiel, allowing for the difference in nature, for Kokabiel was a rougher and sterner being altogether. Nevertheless, the same uncritical allegiance, the same surrender of the personality in loving abandon, was displayed by him as well. And Pullman could see in the face of Sammael the same love streaming out to meet the lesser angel.

After this ceremony, for it could not be called anything but that, they all relaxed, as it were, and the lord Sammael, speaking in English, said to Pullman, "Well, this is wonderful. Our school, our university, has already begun."

He looked around, but Satters had stolen outside on to the balcony, and was now invisible. "I see," he said with a smile, "that one of the teachers has disappeared. But meanwhile everything appeared to be in full swing when I entered. What book is it that you were reading out of, Gatiel?"

"We read *Ivanhoe* by Sir Walter Scott," Gatiel answered timidly, and so the conversation was pursued for a few minutes, Sammael pointing to the empty shelves and telling Pullman that the shelves must be filled with books. He seemed to be very delighted at what he had found and when he left very shortly, and Pullman accompanied him downstairs to the door, he said, "We must meet and seriously discuss the question of starting a school. Only the administration of course, my dear Pullman, would concern you. We can easily find English teachers."

A groom, even more elegant than Sammael himself, was

holding the horses. They mounted, and with a gay wave of the hand, Sammael rode away, several gardeners, Pullman supposed they were, gazing after him with admiration.

"My lord Sammael knows his own business very well, I am sure," reflected Pullman as he returned to the lift. When he reached the flat, Pullman found the two angels speaking excitedly. Their eyes were still blazing, and their voices rivalled one another in sweetness; though Pullman thought that Gatiel's was so abnormally sweet that he put Kokabiel's in the shade. When they were speaking ordinarily their voices were quite different, and not more musical than those of men. Then Gatiel began speaking in English.

"How beautiful, how good, the great lord Sammael is. Oh, how good he is!"

"Beautiful. Good. Good. Good," Kokabiel repeated. fervently.

"I have never seen him near before. I was not quite, but almost struck dead. I was breathless. I thought I should die!" Gatiel's voice seemed short of breath, and after his last remark he tightly pressed his hands together, threw up his eyes, and affected to be experiencing the approaches of death.

Kokabiel, intent upon outdoing Gatiel, called out piteously, "I died, Kokabiel died. You awakened—you made me live!"

"Oh, Kokabiel, I beg you to forgive. How ever can you forgive? You found yourself in the blue heaven—oh miserable me!" Gatiel struck himself heavy blows upon the chest, and then struck his face.

Kokabiel was so impressed with his own (self-induced) misfortune, that he threw himself down upon the floor.

At this point Satters came in from the balcony, and stood staring at the two self-stricken angels.

"Does old Koko feel rotten; Pulley, is Koko ill?"

Pullman put his finger on his lips, and whispered, "Kokabiel died. Do be quiet."

"Have you got bats in the belfry, Pulley?" the intruder growled. After a moment, he asked, with a stronger and more aggressive voice, "Or is old Koko up to his tricks again?"

Satters was just about to aim a good hard kick at the stricken form of Kokabiel sobbing noisily—who however was crying over and over to himself "The blue heaven, the blue heaven" far too loudly to have become aware of the presence

of Satters. But Gatiel, who was by no means so overcome with grief, and was far more quick to understand English, realized what was happening, and rushed towards Satters, calling breathlessly, "Sir, sir, I say goodbye. I must say goodbye! You have been tremendish-ally kind. I and my friend are going!"

He forced Satters back towards the window, as he overwhelmed him with verbosity. Next he flung himself upon Kokabiel, in a paroxysm of compassion, but gently rolling him towards the door. At that, Pullman flung himself down in his turn: he was directly behind Gatiel, calling to him urgently:

"Gatiel—Gatiel! You do not have to do that! I will not allow Satters to misbehave himself. Gatiel, I implore you!"

"What are all you silly fools on the floor for?" Satters responded to this. "Here, take that, Pullman."

And Pullman received on his own bottom what, in the first instance, had been destined for Kokabiel. He sprang up and rushed at Satters.

"You nitwit," he roared. "We shall have to part company if you cannot learn to behave."

Gripping Satters firmly by the arm, he hustled him out of the room and pushed him into his bedroom.

"Stop there, sir, until these visitors have gone, or out you go. Understand!"

Locking the door between the living-room and the rest of the flat, Pullman hurried back to his angel guests, who were standing muttering together.

With a downcast appearance, Gatiel turned to Pullman, and deeply apologised for having been the cause of this scene. He said that both he and his friend hoped that they might be forgiven.

Pullman stopped him, assuring him that it was *he* who must do all the apologising. That Satters was only sixteen years old; that he was a schoolboy, only an excessively badly-behaved one.

"All his values are schoolboy values," he explained. "You are fortunate, you have no children, you do not understand what I am talking about."

Gatiel assured him that they *did* understand. Kokabiel wept again. The two angels left in a very emotional state of contrition, and Pullman attempted to save the day by laughter, which only, however, had the effect of frightening the angelic

visitors—who refused to go down in the lift. Suddenly, in a thunderous stampede, they rushed down the stairs.

Back in the flat, Pullman released Satters, who followed him into the living-room, very sullen, but so far silent.

Now they were sitting opposite one another, and to judge from the expression on Satters' face it was up to Pullman to make amends, but he, Satters, was not going to make it easy for him.

On the other hand, Pullman had a rather different view of the situation. He got to work without any preliminary.

"Talking to you, Satterthwaite, is rather like trying to hold a conversation with a not very large but extremely quarrelsome dog." (Satters eyed him reproachfully but contented himself with smacking his lips after having licked them.) "It is that sort of thing, only to talk to a dog would be considerably easier. Listen. I am sure that the lord Sammael will find some work for you. For the moment, you must accept anything he offers you: later on something may turn up more to your taste. But you cannot sit around here—kicking people who come to visit me, sulking when you are reproved, and simply wasting my time, and everybody else's."

Satters frowned upon this feeble attempt to frighten him. He interpreted what was happening int that way, and considered the stuff about work being found for him as so much bluff: and he was right.

Satters' head could but be described (as was almost always the case) as a reddish potato, which had been kneaded and scraped into the human form. He sat there, his head slightly on one side, keeping a dull, frowning, sceptical eye fixed upon Pullman's face. "What's he going to be up to next?" the dumb potato said: and Pullman mournfully studied this semi-human creature which was forever attached to him—though he realized that he himself was merely another kind of rather superior potato.

During an ensuing period of dull suspense, their lunch was brought in by the smile in the kitchen. So Mr Pullman and Mr Satterthwaite sat down and devoured their lunch in silence —the lack of speech in no way interfering with Satters' appetite.

## XIII

For the rest of that day Pullman left his domestic Caliban to his own devices. In the meantime he had plenty to occupy his mind. The pressures produced by life in a supernatural world never relaxed. He connected his semi-miraculous delivery from terror with his prayerful appeals to God. Here he was at last in safety, apparently, settled in Haus Europa. This had been the action of Satan; yet he did not offer his thanks, in prayer, to Satan, but to his great opposite. This dilemma caused him a distress which he found it difficult to deal with.

What, on Earth, he would have named superstition, was now afflicting him; in an access of what men would call superstition he had applied to God for help. But his prayers had become entangled with unremitting services to Satan, on pleasing whom he was now bound to rely, and superstition was rampant. Should he discontinue his prayers, it would be notified in Heaven that the customary prayerful stream was not arriving. Perhaps an angel would be dispatched to find out what was the reason for the discontinuance; and if this angel were caught, by the vigilant police service, then he might find himself arrested, and transferred from Haus Europa to Dis.

These childish conflicts (as on Earth they would be called) were very real for this unfortunate man, severed from mankind, torn away from his earthly life, and finding himself in a nightmarish existence, where the supernatural was the real, and where he had had to go back to his childhood to deal with a death-life full of traps.

A good instance of the difficulty he had, in one sense, prepared for himself, was this; Sammael had spoken of sending a message, or declaration to God. Supposing he should ask him to help him to compose this message. This document might be extremely offensive. But without any such horrifying contingency as that he had just imagined, any degree of constant co-operation with Satan would place him permanently in the red.

It had, in the first place, been because of a sparrow, then of a live angel (the Padishah), and then because of a delegation from Hell—whose stench was still in his nostrils—and so on,

and so forth, that he had reviewed his earthly scepticism, and here he was, praying on the one hand as if he were back in childhood, and paying court to the devil on the other. A double and contradictory manœuvre.—So, clearly he should not have accepted the Bailiff's advances in Third City: and clearly it was now much too late to think of that.

The next morning the telephone rang about ten o'clock. Borp urgently announced the lord Sammael. Pullman's heart reacted to this summons by freezing into immobility for a moment, and the next moment, when he was answering the summons, his legs were so numb that he made his way with difficulty across the room, to answer the call. The telephone was situated in the hall round which lay the bedroom, bathroom and lavatory.

Sammael was waiting to speak to him, not to say that he had intercepted his message to God, and that the Police were on their way to arrest him, but to apologize for disturbing him, and seeming always to be making calls upon his time, but this was really rather important. He would have come to see Pullman, but he felt it might be difficult for him to isolate himself from his companion; for what they would be speaking about, seclusion would be necessary.—Since it might be a little late, when they had finished, would he have lunch with him afterwards? Quite simple, as before.—A car would come for him at eleven.

It was obvious that Sammael had been informed of the drawbacks of Satters. And it was just as well that he should hear from someone else what the position was as regards his obstreperous housemate.

The car was punctual, and, being a quick-moving automobile, he soon found himself in the "Haus Sammael", as he mentally catalogued it.

It was in quite a different office, this time, that the interview took place. It was in the office buildings at the back of the residence: though it was equally, if not more, private than any place in the domicile. This was, in fact, another house, rigidly sealed off from the premises at the back. Not even the room reserved for his most confidential secretary was located in this small, white, secret building, where his most personal safe was concealed, as everybody knew, though no one knew where.

The room into which Pullman was led was spotlessly clean and scrupulously luxurious—a puritanic luxury, one might say.—The lord Sammael hurried in, apologising for being a little late.

That *The Wardrobe of Satan* would be a highly interesting subject of study, it had occurred to Pullman, as he was mounting to his flat after leaving the beautifully dressed cavalier, who had just ridden away followed by his groom. As Sammael now entered the room, Pullman's mind was turned in the same direction, for at present he was dressed in the soberest fashion: it reminded this observer of an early nineteenth-century romantic rather than a cleric. Or, to compromise this, how he was dressed recalled one of the rather deliberately clerical disguises of a great nineteenth-century romantic, perhaps Baudelaire—though the clerical face possessed by the author of the *Fleurs du Mal* Sammael could lay no claim to, and his great height was another factor wihch gave a different direction to the picture.

That there was an element of theatricality in Sammael was unquestionable: yet this great personage was not a theatrical personality, he was far too real to suggest the actor—and far too much *one thing*. It was more as a politician that he was careful to "dress the part", when he was assuming a part. If he took great care to impress his simple-hearted angelic following in a way that he felt it was necessary to impress them, it was for no trivial reason. His ostentatious Cadillac, his dazzling chauffeur, were things in contradiction to his *taste*, Pullman was convinced of that. The most fundamental thing about Sammael was his puritanism, taking with it, in his case, an intellectual seriousness. But this astute politician no doubt knew that the Puritan was not a popular fellow. Consequently he affected a gayer, a more ostentatious allure than was natural to him. It was as if Cromwell had introduced some lace into his costume, and purchased a gold-headed cane. When, a little later, Pullman got to know Dr Schlank better, he unfolded this analysis of their common patron, and Schlank was in entire agreement with him—except that Schlank suggested that there was a duality here, and that wordly avatars were not disagreeable to him. He sat a horse so well, he was so handsome, he looked so young, and had always enjoyed a position of authority, that when, for his own purpose, he

dressed himself beautifully, mounted a horse, and was naturally accompanied by a groom, he must have felt a zest in that masquerade.

But Pullman sprang up, upon the entrance of this much more severe version of the lord Sammael than he had up till then been shown. Sammael came immediately to the point of this meeting, and to Pullman's dismay it concerned, of all things, the communication which Sammael was proposing to address to God. He leaned heavily upon the arm of the chair, and would not have raised his eyes for anything short of an injunction. Obviously his thoughts were read. The magical powers of this monster before him (for it was monstrous, not human, to wield such powers as those) were such that he was able, five, ten, or perhaps five hundred miles away to be present to his thoughts, as if they had been in telephonic communication. Was he listening in at that very moment to his thinking? If so he would have Mister Eavesdropper know that the exercise of powers of that kind was not conducive to amity, and he could say a great deal more than that.

Pullman continued to converse with Sammael, a little as if he had been blindfolded and strapped to the chair—though, as a matter of fact, he took a very slight part in the conversation.

"I am afraid I am very often indiscreet," Sammael announced; "and I forget how much I have told you, perhaps in the hearing of my butler. If I have spoken of these things before please stop me. The subject is one which will be the better understood if I preface it with an historical note. It is to do with His Majesty in Heaven. I agreed, a long time ago, to administer tortures—for it amounted to that—to the men and women who had failed to keep his commandments. Some of this code of what he called *sin*, quite a lot, I considered fatuous. I resented being offered a job of that kind, but I accepted nevertheless. I had no love for the nasty little animals he proposed to send me, and I hoped I might make him unpopular by the style of punishment I proposed to inflict. In the latter assumption I was incorrect. My prowess merely made man 'love' God all the more (in the jargon of religion), for fear that the diabolical department should think up some awful torment for them if they were found wanting in 'love'.

"Let me observe in passing that this idiotic use of the word 'love' was the result of treating men and women (1) on the

assumption that they were stupider than they were, and (2) as if they were angels dwelling in Heaven and not remote creatures, living a long way away on Earth.—Really of course the whole business of 'worship' was carried on as if Christianity were a Matrimonial Agency: God was the beautiful Bride, for whom poor little Man was supposed to develop a consuming love at a distance—it being the business of the priests to continue to keep pumping love into the client, and tirelessly demonstrating how beautiful (and good) God was. Then *fear* was imparted too: you just *had* to love God or else... That is where I came in—I kept the *fear* up to the correct pitch. I—'the Devil'—was as black as God was white, until I became the most terrifying monster in the Universe. I was supplied with horns, with animal extremities and so on, at the least: as Asmodeus I developed; and in Apocalypse I became a most loathsome dragon of enormous size. And if I am given a bunch of heads, I am lucky if I get off with three. Pullman, do you follow the details of my life story?"

"Oh yes, sir," Pullman answered with a smile, looking up for a second and a half. "And enormously interesting it is."

"You think so? Well, often I have complained to God (shall we call him): have asked him how *he* would like it if I encouraged people everywhere to think of him as a fish—a great and very intelligent fish, who preferred the watery medium: and how all his little 'worshippers' would survive (if they were so fortunate as to survive) as fish? How would he like it if I put that about? No one has ever seen him, have they?—Well, God always answers in the same way. He objects that it was my own fault—that it was I who had chosen the rôle of Devil. At first glance that might seem an accurate account of how the Devil came to be. But after a little analysis it is easy to show that this is quite incorrect."

The room was walled with books from floor to ceiling, and at this point Sammael took down a heavy black book, and placed it on the table at his side.

"About my own origin or that of the angels there is no question. Here is what is said about angels by your greatest encyclopædic authority in matters of divinity. If you will look at this you will see that what I say is correct."

Sammael placed the large book open on Pullman's knees,

and pointed to a marked passage. Pullmann proceeded to read:

"In the writing P. (Priest's Code) no mention is made of angels. Like the existence of God, the existence of angels is presupposed in O.T., not asserted. They are not said to have been created, rather they are alluded to as existing prior to the creation of the Earth (Job 38; Gen. 69; cf. 322, 117). When they appear, it is in human form: they are called 'men'... in N.T. they are called spirit... When they appear they speak, walk, touch men, take hold of them by the hand and also eat with them."

Pullman replaced the book on the table beside which they were sitting, and then, smiling, Sammael continued what he had been saying:

"So you see, Pullman, I have, in some form or other, existed since the beginning of the world—since before, according to Christianity, God began his creating. That disposes of a mistake which I often hear repeated among my Sinners, namely, that I was created by God."

"That is a very interesting point, sir. I do not know what my Catholic divinity would say on the subject, but I do not suppose that they would contradict this Encylopædia."

"No," said Sammael, "I am pre-Genesis, whether in Rome, Canterbury, or Geneva. But, as far as the created earth is concerned, my origins are Mazdean, or shall we say Persian. The language which I, and all other angels, first spoke, proto-Iranian. Now, in speaking to a Christian I must tread warily, but the Jewish God (and subsequently the Christian God) came from Iran, too. The language we spoke when we first knew one another was Iranian: when the Hebrew selected God, his new God learned Hebrew: and that subsequently was the language we spoke—with a strong Persian accent. I have had no purpose in saying all this—I have no diabolic desires to debunk God—except to demonstrate how it came about that Christianity has a Counter-God, as it were, an Anti-Christ, a Devil. The fact is that the Iranian dualism is at the bottom of God's mind. There was from the first a hankering after an Ahriman—a desire to have 'His Darkness'—to use Byron's expression—to balance 'His Brightness'. There was no one in sight who was a suitable opposite of sufficient weight, impressively hideous, out of which to make an Ahriman. And

then I appeared, with my historical opposition to Man. He installed me—a most unsuitable personality, a 'Son of the Morning' and all the rest of it—as his official Opponent, his Ahriman. To conceal my objectionable beauty, a monstrous myth was built up by his publicity agents. And so it is that every Sinner confronted by me as the Devil is looking for my horns and tail. He believes that I am disguised for the occasion —that I am up to one of my tricks, and so on. It has happened —once or twice only, but the effect is invariable—I have gone down to the Punishment Centre in riding dress—with top-boots, and what do you call it?—hunting-crop. The Sinners are electrified. The clubman-Sinner will cheer up, he will think that one gentleman will not be hard on the sins of another. The beautiful female Sinner prepares to charm me—and she cheers up too. But without any fancy dress I am, as far as looks are concerned, a paradoxical Asmodeus.

"The Jewish Religion is, of course, very parochial compared with the Iranian. So its derivatives, Christianity and Mohammedanism, are mainly mythological (indeed, often homely), whereas Iranian thought, in comparison, is conceptual. Iranian divinity certainly had geographic roots, but Mazda is not a national God in the way that Yahweh was . . ."

Sammael was silent, and in this brief pause, in a part of his mind which he believed inaccessible to the thought-reader before him, Pullman allowed a few observations to form, such as these. Were these two Iranian titans, one an angel, the other an unattached gentleman, supposed to meet in the mists of the early world? On what basis did they form an association? But at this point Sammael continued his discourse.

"This piece of history in which I have been indulging may be summarised as follows. Into an essentially tribal, 'chosen people' religion, a phoney cosmic dualism has been introduced, in which I play a ridiculous part. I am where I am as a result of a disagreement with your God, not because I am a malignant promoter of disorder, or because I was born bad. There are plenty of people who are by nature evil, but I am not one of those. Therefore, in the Christian system, I am miscast and, naturally, a weakness has ensued from that.—Now, at this late date I am not going to suggest that some more suitable personality should be found. Do not think that. I have

provided you with a little background. As you may be able to imagine, it is not possible for me to consult with anyone here —either one of the few educated angels or with one of the more intelligent townspeople. So I consult with you! Very eccentric but I can imagine a Roman Emperor choosing some learned captive with whom to talk over something concerning the affairs of state, because his was a neutral mind, rather than some Roman senator or statesman—I have used the expression *neutral*; but that I daresay is inappropriate when applied to you—on earth a Catholic."

This long discourse had interested Pullman extremely: but also he realized almost at once that it had no connection with *him*—as he had been so conceited as to fear: Sammael was unquestionably too preoccupied with his own affairs to have any time left to worry about him. Evidently he was going to be the recipient of a major confidence—simply because he was a stranger, and unable to communicate with any native of these regions, or with any angel either. Surely he was the most isolated being in the Universe. He prepared himself to listen. But he saw that some kind of an answer had to be found to this sudden question.

"I may accurately be described as a neutral," Pullman agreed. "Historically, I am a Christian. But I did not, for the major part of my life, practise my religion, and I died an agnostic. However, I should add that a great abstraction called God, as a matter of inheritance, is natural for me to value—without examining very carefully what it is. That would be a *parochial* matter, as you call it. My parish being Ireland, I would be more willing to discuss my God than I would to be objective about St. Patrick."

Sammael received this answer good-humouredly. "Well, I am not going to talk about St. Patrick or anything as personal as that," he said, laughing. "And I am not going to say anything impolite about your God, or your ex-God: he is my great friend. Over two thousand years ago we had a somewhat violent dispute; but we have been on perfectly civilized terms in the meanwhile—if we write, it is 'My dear old So-and-So', or the equivalent. And I have after all worked for him ever since. I have played the villain for him, a part he cannot do without—or so he believes." Sammael leant a little towards his "counsellor". "No-this is the point—I wish to cease to be

his Devil. It is my idea to send him a missive notifying him of my intention."

There was a long silence. Then Pullman, feeling that he was expected to say something, shook his head, and spoke.

"As you do me the great honour, sir, to take me into your confidence," Pullman said, with great gravity, "I presume you wish me to occupy the rôle, for the moment, of 'counsellor', and, unworthy as I am of such a position, I will, nevertheless, do my best to answer you."

"Thank you, Pullman," Sammael smiled, "that is what I wish you to do."

"Should you resign your post as the 'Evil One', would this make things very difficult for the Allhighest?"

"Oh yes."

"What do you suppose Heaven will do?"

"To try and persuade me to change my mind would be the first step."

"Now, sir, should you decline to change your mind, and leave the Christian God without a Christian Devil, what do you think would be the next move? Would He take any action against you?"

"You mean coerce me?" Sammael asked.

Pullman raised his shoulders and assumed embarrassment. "Since I am quite ignorant of all the factors involved, it would be very presumptuous of me to say what is passing through my mind."

Sammael shook his head. "Proceed, Pullman."

"Well, sir, I think of retaliation; claiming this outfit here as His property . . ."

"He could not do that."

"I suppose," objected Pullman, "that He *could* do anything. What I think it is necessary to envisage is His coming here, and attempting persuasion on the spot."

Sammael's huge shoulders and tossing head participated in an expressive negative. "That would be very difficult," he said. "To move large forces across such immense distances is very difficult. And he is a long way away. No. That, I think, may be ruled out."

"Hannibal crossed the Alps," Pullman said, smiling.

"That was nothing," laughed Sammael. "You may take it from me that this is not a possibility."

Pullman realized the intenseness of the absurdity of himself, a mere man, and a dead man at that, sitting here and discussing with one of the two halves of the Metaphysical World the other half, in this way. He was now on a familiar footing with the Truth of Truth, with the True; and what was most ludicrous, Truth sought his advice! Oh well, what was the use of looking at what was happening at that angle? This was the Arch-Enemy of a Personal God. So there was nothing amazing in his being so personal.

Pullman looked up carefully, hoping that Sammael had not been reading his thoughts—no, all was well. He, and his new friend, Satan, were in the same position as before. He had better go ahead on that basis.

"Direct attack being out of the question," Pullman proceeded, "is there any other way in which you can be injured by your great Antagonist?"

"I can think of nothing that would matter. He of course would denounce me as a much blacker devil than even he had suspected. Everyone who still believes in God would cross himself, and say 'what a monster!' But I could bear that, I think."

"Then," said Pullman, "there really is nothing to consult about?"

Sammael laughed. "Wait a moment! There is another matter, quite independent of what we have just been talking about, which I should like to talk over with you. It is connected with the future of the angel community."

"It would interest me very much, sir." Pullman displayed great attentiveness. He was devoutly thankful that Heaven was to be discussed no more.

"My story begins," Sammael observed, "with the fact, Pullman, of my position here; I am accepted Leader of the angels in Angeltown. There are in this cultivated area where we live perhaps two hundred thousand angels beside the thirty thousand here. More than a hundred thousand of these come to our rallies, and continue to live as angels, and for these I am Leader. You understand? We are all assembling tomorrow—most of the day. You had better stop at home—but you can watch us being angels from your front window."

"I shall do so," Pullman assured him.

"But there are about sixty or seventy thousand who do *not*

live as angels: who do not come to rallies here, or have angel-rallies of their own. A certain proportion of these outcast angels have married local women; about half, I think; and of course, they grow in numbers. Some have as many as twenty children. The males are usually very big chaps. A team of these children-of-angels came here a few years ago; they were defeated by our boys, but they were very good athletes."

Sammael handed Pullman a photograph of about a dozen young men, extremely robust-looking, and with faces such as one met with in Angeltown. "You see? And a hundred years hence there will be a horde of these half-castes, male and female."

"Their attitude, their loyalty to you would naturally be questionable. Their fathers too are disaffected?" Pullman inquired.

"On the whole, not. But you see the kind of situation we are confronted with here."

A silence of some minutes ensued. Then Pullman spoke.

"I have—superficially of course—absorbed these facts. I see, roughly, what these things mean."

"God has an elaborate secret service down here (I never know who is a spy). But he is informed of all that occurs here. He reproached me for the poor discipline, very bitterly."

"What did you say to that?"

"I told him to mind his own business." Sammael laughed. "But I might have said that I am not an old autocrat as he is. Apart from that, however, I was moving in the same direction, here in Angeltown, myself. And soon I shall introduce Woman into my colony here, as well. This is a great secret, so remember, do not speak of this to anyone."

"You may depend, sir, on my treating anything you say as a matter of confidence."

"Thank you, Pullman. And so let me proceed at once to one of the things you have to know, if you are to advise me in the matter of this communication.—It is my purpose to propose to the Angeltown colony that they abandon their angel status, because it is out of date. We should then have no military organisation, of the kind we have at present (aimed only at an adequate defence on angelic lines). I shall propose that we organise another type of military power. The regiments of police are at present trained as infantry. These should be

converted into the nucleus of an army. There I should come to the point: I will show how our colony of thirty thousand angels, become thirty thousand *men*, would have quite different ideas of how to pass their time. They would not want to idle away the time. *How* they were going to spend their lives would have to be thought out at once. And then I should have to turn to the future. I should point out, for instance, that a large number of our fellow-angels, already twice as many as those living in Angeltown,—are producing families—and in fifty years will have greatly outnumbered us. And so, you see, I shall, step by step, arrive at the question of *women*. All this will be a shock. It will be so revolutionary, that there will be at first, of course, a great deal of opposition. But I think I shall be able to push it through fairly rapidly. And then you see, Pullman, one would have to envisage a situation—if most of our angels take wives—in which thirty thousand patriarchs, who have lived for thousands of years, will find themselves in the midst of swarms of people who have just come into the world, and, my dear counsellor, the question of *Government* will have to be decided. We have no system of government in the earthly sense, for the problems of how to govern or how to be governed have not been present. Who should lead, and who follow, was all decided in the distant past. But very soon now such matters will have to be reconsidered. We shall need a constitution. You do appreciate, my dear Pullman, how many things there are to bear in mind—for everything is related to everything else."

"I understand very well the way in which those questions must be argued out," Pullman said, "if you are proposing to make the changes you have outlined."

"Very well, very well." Sammael nodded amiably, recognizing his listener's attentiveness with satisfaction. "You see, Pullman, it is perfectly evident that, apart from anything else, we cannot build up a society of men, while we have in the middle of us a huge slaughterhouse like Dis—like Hell."

The lord Sammael threw himself back in his chair, and Pullman and he looked at one another for a moment, and then Pullman exclaimed, "Now, at this point let us stop. This is where we have to organise things a little, make a pattern—what do you say, sir?"

"Excellent. Where do you propose to begin?"

"First, you have a great deal to do, which is certain to take far more time than you anticipate. You are not used to time, sir. You have never had to deal with time; at least, time has never been something of critical importance with you. What now you have to do, is to accustom yourself to take time seriously, to think in terms of time. If you do not master time, time will master you."

"Do not be so minatory, my dear Pullman. I shall always be able to keep time in its place. But I realize time's importance. Thank you. Thank you all the same, Pullman. You have some very bright ideas, for which I am most grateful. You must never be afraid of offending me. I am above offence."

"Yes, sir, I fully understand that also. If you were not so great, I should not be able to talk to you like this. If I were not so little, you would not feel so much at home with me."

Sammael guffawed at this.

"You are a bright midget, thank God." He shook with laughter.

"Well, sir, let us get back to business. Allow me to say, sir, the last thing you should do is to think of communicating with Heaven. Since the secret service organisation in Heaven is so efficient, let them find out for themselves what is taking shape down here. Now, sir, what do you possess, on your side, by way of an information bureau? Is there a reliable secret service throughout the angel community—here, and in the other two places—those who are ahead of you in increasing the population, and the still angelic neighbours? May I venture to ask if you are well represented in Heaven? How about your colleagues here ruling Angeltown? Have you got a little man beneath their beds or behind their dining-room curtains? And Heaven? Have you made it worth the while of White Angels to bring you news immediately of any fresh move on the part of the Allhighest? There should be an informant at His breakfast table—a listener-in at His counsels. Clearly all this is the A B C of such a struggle. Oh, sir, your power is so great that I am sure you are very careless. May I suggest that you do not go into action or speak a word regarding these plans of yours, until you have a dictaphone installed in all their private houses? And even then, do not go baldheaded at the matter. A bit at a time. And broach nothing yourself—get your best

friend to put out a little feeler here, and another feeler there. Do not move yourself until you know precisely what to expect. And, lastly, soften things up before you begin operations: let your angels pass another ten or twenty years as men before you ask them to be men altogether. Have several teams of athletes born twenty to twenty-five years ago over here, to play with angel teams. Have copies of *Esquire* subscribed for the public reading-room. Collect some women—some good lookers, down at Dis. Hide them up somewhere, busy learning angel talk. Have some good-looking girls drafted from other towns and brought over. Have a cut-and-dried plan about the method henceforth. Foresee every difficulty. Think out carefully for a least a hundred years where government buildings should be erected. Study the Napoleon Code, and such things. (Read Blackstone, for instance.) Then draw up your own laws. Get your adult university for angels under way. The lectures there will help a great deal.—Meanwhile keep Dis going full blast. Start up some new department, to put spies off the scent."

Sammael had listened attentively, but a broad smile had begun to spread across his face. At this point he held up his hand, and addressed his "counsellor" in the following way.

"You think of me, my dear sir, as a King of the Cannibal Isles. You must remember that mine has been a life of intrigue for longer than I can remember."

"Since you took me into your confidence, quite deliberately, of course, *not* as a master of intrigue, and a legendary Prince of Subtleties . . ."

"Spare my blushes," Sammael cried. "Say no more. But believe it or not, mine is quite a simple angel-mind. I am always amazed at the tortuous nature of the European diplomat."

"Well, sir, I ventured to presume that you were so simple-hearted as not to have dictaphones placed in suitable positions in the homes of those angels who share with you the government of Angeltown, nor to have spies in every corner of this remarkable community you have created here."

Sammael's eyes were amused, and he slowly shook his head. "You are right in all that you assume. But"—he rose to his feet—"let us have a break in this long confabulation. Let us

have lunch . . . and while we are doing that, we must, of course, speak of other things. The butler remains in the room."

"Yes, sir, of course."

On the threshold of the dining-room they met the English butler. His whiskers were there, Pullman felt sure, at his master's request. The man greeted him personally, and as soon as he was seated at the table he asked him if he would like *Toast Melba.*

"What is Melba?" Sammael inquired, smiling at what he regarded as a tribal delicacy.

"Melba was the Flagstad of the day before yesterday." Seeing that Flagstad rang no bell, he added, "An Australian opera star, Edwardian."

"How extraordinary," was the host's comment, as he broke the curling cauterized bread. "So she is remembered."

"Remembered by means of something as two-dimensional as she was three-dimensional." And Pullman, in the air, drew a flamboyant *embonpoint.*

"She left only her silhouette," observed Sammael, "a curling wave. But what other singer has left her signature upon our tables!"

"It must have been the French who liked her curling bosom, and set the wave rolling down the ages." Pullman laughed.

"How long will it continue to roll?" asked Sammael.

"As long as there are English butlers in Hell," replied Pullman, looking at his compatriot.

"Ah yes. All things end in the whiskers of a functionary," Sammael intoned.

"Should Hell not become too hot for him." Pullman thought he would give another twist to it.

"Can anything be too hot for an Englishman?" asked Sammael.

"The English are not, however, what they were." And Pullman felt that he had come to the end of the coil. But Sammael added, "As long, then, as there are butlers in Hades with enough of the stiffness of the Thin Red Line to achieve a pure *Toast Melba.*"

"I did not make it, sir," remarked, with typical modesty, the lord Sammael's butler.

A roar of laughter broke from Sammael and his guest.

"I fear that we can go no farther," Pullman remarked.

"It would be unseemly to do so," said Sammael with finality.

They found themselves alone, and they spoke of the industrious angels, whose ambition it was to learn English.

"They are rather uncommon," Sammael told him.

"There were about two dozen customers in the bookshop," said Pullman. "I hope you underrate the numbers. However, if you collected fifty for a University of Adult Education that would be all I should expect—out of thirty thousand," Pullman added with a smile.

"That is too cynical." Sammael seemed depressed. "Once we get started, we should have five hundred."

"You might," said Pullman, "you might get a number of triflers. But you should remember that there is *no purpose*. There are thousands of years of indolence behind them. I do not say *indolence* carpingly; I consider indolence, under certain circumstances, a glorious thing."

"I understand—I understand."

"Thank you, sir. In a European university, you see, they work hard in order to equip themselves for a career; to be a lawyer, a politician, a journalist, or some other form of writer, a teacher, an engineer, a priest, a philosopher. They have to secure degrees, such as Master of Arts—diplomas, to enable them to get themselves well placed in the various professions. These are practical inducements to study. But to create a university, would you not be obliged first to create professions, such as those represented in the above list? So, sir, your first task in building a university for angels would be to invent an inducement to persuade these idlers to work at book learning. That is a worthy problem . . . again, sir, let me emphasise that the term *idler* is not offensive in any way. A European Chancellor of a university would regard an angel as an 'idler'; that is because he regards the acquisition of learning as a necessary prerequisite to the acquisition of power."

"My dear young man," Sammael laughed, "please do not apologise. I understand entirely what you are saying. You are explaining very clearly what you wish me to understand, and I am your most willing and grateful audience."

"Thank you, thank you, sir, for being so attentive and understanding."

Sammael nodded twice. He allowed his mind to go on a

flight, while Pullman waited patiently. But Sammael's mind returned.

"I shall have to give some thought to this," Sammael said.

"There are many things to which thought has to be given. For instance, a nucleus of intelligent society must be created *socially*—quite apart from universities. A club should be founded. Are there any intelligent angels? And, another question, what is the social structure of Angeltown? Is there any social hierarchy, are there any 'sets'? Are there any groups of 'friends'? Is there a 'highbrow' and a 'lowbrow' society? Is there anyone competent to discuss the culture of Greece or of China? Mark, at whose house I lodged, speaks French fluently. Is there any society *elsewhere*—not in Angeltown?—I ask these questions—I venture to do so—because they are facts it is necessary to know, if culture is to be built up in Angeltown."

The lord Sammael smiled, as he devoured the whipped cream of a delicious sweet. The cream possessed the flavour of something like Maraschino, Pullman delicately consumed the same scented substance.

"You have discharged a number of questions at me, Pullman, which you did not intend that I should answer. They were not questions in other words, but a catalogue of things which a man, placed as you are, would have to know before he could discuss things cultural. There is no cultural basis here whatever. There are a few men—who are angels—to whom I could introduce you, who can speak either English or French, with whom you could speak as freely as you do with me. Next, another point. There is no equivalent here of wealth (which provides social status in America) or birth (which provides social status, apart from wealth, in England). I am the equivalent of Stalin in Russia or of the President in the United States; or the Prince in Monaco, or of Peron in the Argentine Republic: but, as you realize, there is no equivalent between the supernatural and the natural. I am just the Devil—*et voilà!*"

They both laughed: the Devil boisterously, Pullman discreetly.

"I think I am aspiring to perform the impossible—as though Stalin suddenly aspired to establish a *Sans-Souci* or as if the Canadians determined to be at once as imperialistic and as

cultivated as Louis XIV of France, or as if Brazil attempted to turn itself into nineteenth-century England."

"If a lily-of-the-valley aspired to develop into a bougainvilia? That is a very despairing picture of the transformation which you have in mind, sir," Pullman deprecated.

"Well," Sammael concluded, "we have time and to spare to provide all the answers for you to all your queries. Let us turn to your personal requirements. Are you perfectly comfortable with your young friend in your present quarters? Is your young friend comfortable?"

Pullman thought that this would be a good opportunity to throw a little light on Satters.

"The young Anglo-Saxon barbarian who lives with me is an obligation." Pullman shook his head. "Sharing my life, this very young man is responsible for a misunderstanding. A homosexual attachment is attributed to me. People cannot see any other reason for the presence of this young idiot. But these suppositions have no foundation in fact." Then Pullman briefly outlined how he and Satters had come to meet in the camp outside Third City, and he recognized him at once as his former fag. Having explained what a "fag" was he said how he had acted as a protector to this young gentleman ever since. Sammael was much entertained at the narrative of Satters' contact with the angels, his misbehaviour, and how eventually Pullman was compelled to lock him up in the bedroom.

"It is worse than having an obstreperous old wife!" Sammael exlaimed. "Why do you not beat him? I have never heard of such an incubus. Wives behave in that way, but the law protects the female bully."

"Ah, well," Pullman sighed. "There is a reason for this odd companion. Satters must be regarded as a domestic animal of whom I am kind of fond."

"You should not cohabit with an animal, my dear Pullman."

Pullman laughed good-naturedly, and shortly afterwards the lunch ended. Then they returned to the office. "This is my very private office; this is where I do my thinking—any very careful thinking. And this, Pullman, is where I suggest that the discussion, begun today, may be methodically continued. I am in entire agreement with what you advise regarding the necessity of caution."

Pullman smiled once more, as he thought of himself instructing the Prince of Darkness in guile. "It is your nature to be fearless in everything, I surmise. I speak as a man, who is obliged to cultivate caution. His teaching is to place the foot gently first, to tap the ground, to find out if it is firm. The foot of the Red Indian is the ideal for man, the noiseless tread. I am not so silly as to propose methods of that kind for your Excellency. But, of course, in consulting me, I must always speak as a man, and recommend strategy and the stealthy advance. What you are preparing should explode among men and angels. There should be no hint of your intentions before you are completely ready to defend what you have in mind. What I feel, sir, is that this is a new departure entirely, that your future will be altogether different from your past; and therefore, you must develop new techniques."

"That is very just, Pullman. I am proposing a great revolution in everything about me. My position will be altering all the time. You, with your Red Indian techniques, are just the thing that is needed. But Man does not have to look two or three hundred years ahead as we do. He knows that he will be dead. It is quite different with me. I must prepare for these new generations of men, the descendants of angels, who, in two hundred years, will have overrun everything here. Here am I, turning myself into a man, transforming myself from the supernatural into the natural. In proposing to my fellow angels to change themselves from angels into men I am planning a liquefaction, as it were, of those titanic immortal units —their immortality will dissolve into mortality, their vast individual shapes will be cut up into thousands of facsimiles of themselves. There would be everywhere a swarming of ephemeral units in place of a world of larger and more stable things."

"Yes, sir. There is lethargy in that vast stability. You prefer to sacrifice individuality for the mass mind of man, a thousand minds, each possessing the freshness and creativeness of a momentary existence—accumulating in itself the knowledge of millions. You are proposing a Human Age."

The lord Sammael, smiling, held up a finger. "That," he said, "is the philosophy of the swarming of mankind in its historic, its unmodified form. I think that Man will choose for

himself a life-span, five or ten times as long as that of Plato or Newton. I am aiming myself at a compromise between the angelic stability and the human mercurialism.—But you have corrected my momentary revulsion at the idea of the *liquefaction* of my fellow-giants contemplated by me. You have answered my qualms. *Life* is not so important, is it?"

"I enjoy, myself," Pullman answered, "a kind of immortality, but the speck of brilliant light which is life to man is acceptable on the terms of a great creation. Man's mind is horrified by immortality, where immortality represents an interminable animal survival. You describe, sir, one of your stupider angels as living for ten or twenty thousand years without any speculation, or intellectual stir of any kind—not more than is known to a healthy child of six or seven. Immortality on those terms is frightening. In other words, the immortal is only justified when one sees *to what* he gives perpetuity. I desire a limited perpetuity for the Newtons and the Plancks, and the human effort is, at present, directed to giving it them. If you could surrender to them a little of your immortality, that would be wonderful. A superb Human Age could be built upon a suitable planet, where all the high activities could blossom. Your own ambitions, as you explain them to me, are going out to join the human ambitions. That is how I see it."

"For the humanity of your imagination, Pullman, I should have the utmost respect. Even as it is, if I had to change skins with somebody, I would rather it should be with a Newton or an Einstein than with the average angel."

"I am glad to hear you say that, sir. Since you allow me to speak openly, let me say that I cannot regard the power exercised by the superhuman as any more admirable than power in the hands of a human being. A tyrant is always a tyrant, whether he lives for ever, or only lives for the human span."

"You are very right, Pullman." Sammael spoke emphatically. "The bossiness of a certain person, known to both of us, produces in me the same sensations that absolute power does in the human. But let us now, my friend, turn our thoughts in the direction of that subject which was the main purpose of this meeting. It was in order to discuss the form of a communication I had intended to address to the Christian

God that I asked you to come and see me. Let us devote ourselves to the general problem of God."

"Yes, sir. If you think that the problem of God can be satisfactorily disposed of in a day."

The eyes of Sammael flashed, smiling over at the downcast eyes of his "counsellor".

"Was it the Jesuits who trained you, Pullman?" Sammael asked, laughing. "I think you will find that tomorrow, or whenever we next meet, we shall have more important subjects than God to deal with."

"Actually what it appeared necessary for me to say, sir, could be packed into a few minutes, I daresay. It seemed most important that you should never be explicit: for what advantage is there in divulging to that Great Person what you propose to do?"

"Well, I wished that he should discontinue the despatch to me of streams of Sinners. He must make other arrangements."

"A little conversation has shown, however, that the more Sinners he sends the better: for what you require is the physicist, the mathematician, the engineer, and these you can only obtain as Sinners. Also the better-looking women are going to come in very handy to provide the raw material for your plans. Indeed, sir, I suggest *all* women under forty should be held up and directed to some other centre—not to Dis. Even if it were not for these two very important considerations, it would be highly inadvisable to announce that you will be severing all connections between God and yourself, as to resign your position as Devil would be to do.—If you will allow me to say so, sir, that great person I call God should not be underestimated in your plans. He would not come here, you think, and set up another devil in your place. But . . ."

There was a pause. Then Sammael said quietly, "I understand the possibilities of interstellar communication better than you do, and I have told you that there is no danger of his undertaking so difficult an expedition. Continue, my friend."

"Forgive my questions, but does the unfortunate obloquy of 'Devil' rest squarely upon *your* shoulders, sir, or is that shared by the other leaders of the angel community? Are these leaders completely loyal to you—are you powerfully and solidly supported? Or do you stand in splendid isolation?"

"The fact that I consult you, Pullman, demonstrates the extent to which I stand alone. I do not take into my confidence other angels. I act alone. None of my colleagues are men of great ambition. I have never found them untrustworthy. My leadership has never been challenged."

"Thank you, sir, and forgive me for inquiring into these matters of power as if you were a man. However, I suppose whoever is isolated has the same type of problem to contend with—whether man or God."

Sammael laughed. "If you have your way you will turn Hell into a Balkan State."

"The larger the State, the more secret agents it employs," Pullman replied with a smile.

"I think the human, in contrast with the divine, are great intriguers," said Sammael. "One of my colleagues in Angeltown would be tremendously surprised if he discovered that his house-boy was my spy, or I, on my side, would be even more amazed if I found that my English butler was in *his* pay. But as a result of these conversations I shall develop suspicions. I shall keep my weather-eye open."

"I have been turning over in my mind what protection you should have. Your nobility of mind, and also your long immunity from attack, today need an up-to-date system of defence. I think you should have an air-patrol armed and on the look-out for angel visitors, which would have orders ruthlessly to pursue the intruder. The thing to observe would then be the colleague who noisily protests at this unusual precaution."

"Very well. One shall be posted tonight."

"The patrol should be of three or four trustworthy angels nightly. You will know if the patrol should be posted in daylight. It would, I suppose, be a new service. Ten men at least would be required. The messengers might come to earth outside the town. All roads should be patrolled day and night. This would involve a motorcycle unit of the police. You could perhaps have its headquarters set up near your offices."

"Yes."

"It is most important to identify any untrustworthy person. *Any* stranger should be arrested. Any obvious angel walking along the road anywhere outside the city should be put under

guard. It would have to be an intelligent officer. A suspect could be handcuffed and carried in a sidecar to Headquarters here, where a lock-up would be provided—windowless, with irons riveted in the floor."

"That would be for suspect angels!" Sammael laughed.

"Yes, sir. There would be no flying away if I had the construction of it," Pullman assured him. "Now, in answering colleagues regarding these new services, you would carefully concoct the likeliest story. If anyone is untrustworthy he must not be made uneasy. If he is an influential man he will be certain to betray himself by his protests at these new services. In which case some means should be taken to watch him, and find out who his friends are. There are other ways in which you should be protected. But let us see if anything turns up in connection with these precautionary services. By the way, the individuals of these services should be armed, and empowered to arrest anyone (while on duty, or off duty) who approaches them and attempts to secure information from them about their duties. Any such suspect should be carefully screened, and his mode of life investigated. Finally, I suggest that these patrols should move about in pairs—two men are stronger than three."

Sammael was rapidly taking notes. Pullman felt sure that these services would be organised.

"Remember that, when the sea is dragged for one kind of specimen of little-known fish, often specimens of an even rarer kind are discovered. You may observe goings-on of the most unusual sort, even if you do not secure evidence of the kind you seek. But let us see."

Pullman waited while Sammael continued writing. At last the latter looked up.

"I have thought of another service I will organise. I feel sure that this strange fishing of yours will turn up some very odd fish."

"The more traps that are set the better," Pullman asserted. "It may be found that Heaven is more interested than you think. But it is most important to know if there are Heavenly adherents here.—Then it will be necessary to extract from the person in question what it is that especially interests the Heavenly Power. You might find out if Heaven has any interests in Dis."

"I thought of that. I have a note about that." Sammael pointed to his notes.

"Unless I am wrong, Heaven will very rapidly learn of these new precautions. You may then receive a communication from your Old Friend!"

This conversation continued till nearly five o'clock, when Sammael rang for his car, and Pullman was driven back to Haus Europa.

## XIV

About ten o'clock the next morning thousands of giants began springing up all over Angeltown, and then hurried away on to an assembly ground outside the town. Without straining the neck up, Pullman found nothing could be seen but enormous legs: and when you did peer upwards into the sky it was a bottom that you saw, not a head. It was only at a distance of a mile or two that the full body came into view, and the monstrous faces could be seen without too much difficulty.

When two or three thousand of them had collected outside the town, at a signal they spread their wings and began flying up into the air, headed by the lord Sammael. They soon became a flying mass, which got smaller, and eventually disappeared altogether.

This went on all day until the late afternoon; at a signal, two or three thousand of them making a monstrous appearance, hurrying to the assembly place, and flying away. So, for the inhabitants of the Haus Europa, the day was spent indoors, Satters, of course, remaining with his nose glued to the window, and Pullman spending a good deal of time there, attempting to catch an angel in the act of growing from man-size up to the terrific height of a fully-grown angel. At last he was satisfied: he witnessed the transformation act. It was of magical suddenness. In a few moments a man-sized figure, standing in the middle of the enormous thoroughfare of Angeltown, shot up into the air, acquiring the measureless bulk which was not a natural phenomenon but a purely supernatural one.

These towering mirages were as solid as the seed of six-foot-three was solid from which they grew. But neither possessed the material objective validity of the Earth-born. The titan angels were vessels containing millions of gallons of blood; but it was faery blood. Pullman realized all this, without being able to explain quite what this meant. He only had one means of understanding, which was his own body; and scrutinising that told him very little.—Perhaps, when the Cinema is wholly three-dimensional, projecting giant figures existing in our own dimension, the resultant

persons may resemble a little bit, he reflected, these vast creatures he was looking at. But where the projectors were, and what was the nature of the hidden figures working them, was another matter.

However he knew that he was living in a non-natural universe (as if he had been one of the solid-looking figures in a three-dimensional cinema): and here, as he stood looking out of this window, was the most startling evidence of the sort of cosmos in which he lived.

Satters was so fascinated by these goings-on that it was as much as he could do to tear himself away from the window, and have his lunch or his tea. What was even more exciting was when the flights began to return. Often two or three thousand huge bodies were attempting to land at the same time that two or three thousand more were just about to take off. But they had done this so often that the timing was wonderful. Complicated as it was, there were no accidents. The most that happened was that there were sometimes great numbers of angels in flight above the assembly place, waiting for a new batch to get away, and sliding down on their heels.

Many more conversations took place between the lord Sammael and Pullman, until Pullman became an unofficial Counsellor. His most recent recommendations were not only listened to with approval, but were put into effect with surprising rapidity. Patrols, by road and also aerial, were organised at once. During the first twenty-four hours of their watch results were surprising and of great importance. The haul of agents, arriving by air, and picked up very shortly afterwards upon the roads approaching Angeltown, was continued nightly and also daily. The places of confinement had to be considerably extended, and eventually a building to house them all appeared.

A member of the governing body of Angeltown, one of Sammael's earliest and oldest friends, was implicated. It was proved beyond any doubt (there were the angel-messengers from Heaven to bear witness) who was engaged in conspiring with God against the lord Sammael. But the defection of Arakamba, more than that of any other, provided a really great shock for Sammael! This prominent angel was eventually tried and convicted. Sammael pleaded for him.

The sentence which was the nearest thing with immortals to death was avoided; he was merely banished. "If you find Heaven more to your taste, you may fly there," were the words of his judges. There was a second angel, Jonquil, of high standing, who was proved to be in communication with God. His case was a different one altogether, and he was forgiven. But all those minor angels, proved to be in the same undercover service as Culprit No. 1, were arrested and expelled.

The Governors of Birapolis and several towns or big villages beyond it, agreed to have similar patrols, and at once a number of people, of one sort or another, were rounded up. There were several angels from Heaven in that net. In Birapolis a man was found living who by his accent was recognized as an angel from Heaven. All these events triumphantly vindicated Pullman as a Counsellor. The nature of the intrigue revealed angered Sammael very much, and made him pursue his plans with greater concentration than before. He did not pass on to Pullman in any detail the nature of the conspiracy which led to the banishment of his old associate, but it had been the intention of the conspirators, Pullman gathered, to relegate Sammael more completely and utterly to the rôle of Devil, the Director of Dis, and to deny him a leading position in Angeltown. No angels, except Sammael, had taken any part in the punishment of Sinners, or only in the very early days. It was of course Arakamba who was to supersede him as President of the Council of the ruling body in Angeltown. This had been a plot against him promoted by the divinity. These discoveries made Sammael more implacable in everything. He was now more determined than ever to wind up Hell—but not before his defensive arrangements were complete.

A fully-fledged Secret Service came into being. Offices were built not far from the Headquarters of the patrols, and of the Agents or Political Police. Pullman was responsible for the appointment of the Bailiff as head of all these services. Pullman had insisted that the Bailiff was the most dishonest man he knew, and admirably suited to administer a system of espionage and counter-espionage. The Bailiff eventually organised and co-ordinated all the secret services from his office in the new building.

When the ex-Bailiff had been carried out of the lord Sammael's front door, leaving his dental plate in the hand of one of his captors, everything seemed lost. An impartial observer of the exit of this little man from Sammael's house would have predicted that he was also making his exit from life.

He was duly tried in one of the courts of the Punishment Service, and assigned a cell in the toughest part of Dis. As an object of general envy, as the legendary pasha of Third City, he was treated with more than usual brutality. Almost at once he had his nose cut off, and his eyebrows plucked out. The staff in his part of Dis were preparing some exemplary torture for him, but, in the nick of time, his mother Madame Heracopoulos visited the lord Sammael. As a rule Sammael declined to see any woman, young or old, who desired an interview. But this old woman was a different matter. Her husband had been the Governor of Dis: Sammael had had a long association with this extremely ruthless individual, for whom he had a warm spot in his heart. So he agreed immediately to receive a visit from the widow of his great inquisitor.

As he saw this ghastly phantom enter his office, swaddled in the deepest black, filmy-eyed and tottering, as near sexless as it is possible to be, the little warm spot in his heart glowed dimly. He rose, and with deep respect saw that this archaic symbol was comfortably seated, and asked her, with great politeness, how she fared. When, a little later, she referred to the terrible situation in which her son found himself, another of the little spots with which his heart was peppered produced the effect of a particle of ice in a vital centre. But the warm spot was so much larger than this little speck of ice, that it proved a counter-influence, able to suppress entirely the very cold spot (but ineffective because so small), given off by the Bailiff.

When the old lady left the lord Sammael she had secured a complete pardon for her son. The little elephant duly arrived at his ancestral home, and was immediately placed in the hands of a plastic-surgeon of the highest repute. Within a surprisingly short time he possessed a new nose, quite as good as that he had lost: and, what was perhaps still more of a surgical feat, new eyebrows began to sprout almost at once upon his desiccated forehead. So when he was called upon to

assume the directorship of this new, vastly important, and extremely congenial service, he was on the way to becoming as good a man as ever he had been. He looked a little odd at first, to the more observant of his staff: but gradually all trace of the plastic rehabilitation disappeared, and his eyebrows had never been a very important part of his face, since they always were reared so high above his eyes that they tended to be lost in his constantly furrowed brow.

So there he was, Nato Heracopoulos, Director, placed over all the secret services, as soon as this building was ready, in the midst of a swarm of secretaries, informers, thugs and so forth. One day when this large establishment and the services controlled by it were in full swing, Pullman paid his old friend a visit.

The Bailiff flung himself at Pullman and threw his arms around his neck.

"My little Poolman—saviour of my flea-bitten old hide—God bless you. And how are you this morning? Come to see your poor old uncle at his rat's work? I am already the terror of all the whisperers and cellar-plotters for five hundred miles. I have been offered golden wings and high office near the Emperor, if I would go and live in Heaven. Angels and messengers swarm in here daily from Yahweh's Messenger Office in Heaven.—My patrols give them a lift. My answer is always the same; I tell them that I prefer rat-catching in Hell to blowing bubbles in Heaven."

At the other end of Angeltown, meanwhile, the Adult University was under way, about sixty angels steadily attending the lectures. The Director was, of course, Pullman. Its lecture-rooms were necessarily chaotic, one providing the most elementary French or English class, another, in a confusion of tongues, attempting to communicate a little information about physics, or politics, or Earth-history, or ethnology. Of some political use, culturally it could not make much headway. Pullman realized that the angel language must be learned, and in six months he could make himself understood, in twelve months he could converse.

In that time he also had become a friend of Dr Schlank. They saw each other daily, always speaking in German. If

there was anything about which he felt he would like to consult with some person of objective mind, it was Schlank he went to. There was no one else. They relaxed together, frequently dining, and after that singing German songs, and comparing earthly experiences.

For Satters a congenial occupation had been found. There was an English-speaking gardener in the small park at the back of Haus Europa. This man consented to use Satters as a kind of apprentice. Whatever Satters was told to do he invariably did the opposite, if he could find an opposite. But he received a small sum of money and he was as happy as a sand-boy. It made him more arrogant and overbearing, but he was away all day, and in the evening he slept quite a lot.

Pullman's religious revival was not in any way checked as a consequence of the sort of counsel he was providing Sammael with, all of great use to his Satanic Majesty. His communings with God, indeed his prayerful dependence upon his patron's great enemy, increased. His way of accounting for his days, spent with His Majesty the Devil, was to say that he was, in reality, spying out the weakness of this evil personage. Every night he informed God of what he had done during the day-time. He was never quite certain as to the reality of a prayer, or if it could find its way into ears for which it was not intended.

It was about one year and three months after the beginning of his almost daily consultation with Pullman, that Sammael attended the weekly meeting of the governing body of Angel-town, and made his revolutionary proposal: namely, that the angel status of the Angeltowners and the other angel communities in those regions was out of date, and that, without abandoning altogether angel status, they should transform themselves into something like Man, attempting to combine the advantages of both.

Led by one of the friends of Arakamba, the banished angel, there was a party of reactionaries who showed violent opposition.

Sammael met this dissent smilingly. In day-long debate he deployed all his reasons: and some of the points he made, about their position in a hundred years hence, when they would begin to be outnumbered by men of angel origin, but not titans, elicited a great deal of applause. By the time the

debate closed for the day Sammael had a majority at his back which far outnumbered the reactionary group. More than thirty thousand pamphlets had been printed, and a copy was distributed the same day to all the Angeltowners, and offices were opened every mile or so in the inhabited areas—propaganda centres for the Sammael proposals. The closing, before long, of Dis was foretold. Was it not a barbarous survival? The angel community was destined for great things. With their supernatural advantages they would go far, if they abandoned their age-old lethargy and launched out into a new life. Had they not already made a beginning? Was not the building of Angeltown a big step in the right, the forward-looking direction? Did any angel or any man in Angeltown want to go back a century or two, when they lived like primitive titans, etc., etc., etc.

There were demonstrations that night in favour of Sammael's plan in the more popular districts of Angeltown. The next day the Fifth Police Regiment, the crack regiment (in which Mark had acted as mess-sergeant and cook), paraded with two bands. The bands remained, and there was dancing in Angelsway.

Sammael was in consultation with Pullman, and the latter proposed a Fiesta.

"Declare a holiday in two weeks' time," Pullman advised. "No. Better in one month. That will give me more time . . . call an emergency meeting of the governing body at once, at which your large majority will assure a victory. This Council Meeting will decree the transformation of certain points in the town, in preparation for the Fiesta. At the Sports Circle illuminated fountains must play; there must be places for bands. Confetti, masks, postiche noses, moustaches, fancy caps, etc., must immediately be manufactured. The sale of these and other things will help pay for the expense of the Fiesta."

The business rushed forward, day by day, to its climax. Parking space was marked out for cars and buses arriving from Birapolis and the places beyond it.

BRING YOUR WIVES
AND GIRLS

was printed on the backs of the invitation cards, which were distributed all over the country.

Pullman worked day and night. A car was put at his disposal. He wrote handbills and inflammatory *brochures*.

"You must put everything fearlessly into this, sir!" he exclaimed. "This is your first highly popular move."

The trump card, of course. was WOMAN. All the young ladies from the non-angelic township were rounded up and for a long time now Sammael had been collecting belles.

He had got together literally hundreds of women, quite a fair percentage of goodlookers. Pullman had been down, and examined all these women. As they would have to remain there together for some time, he organised their quarters. A capable man was put in charge, and a staff appointed—a catering staff, among other things, was practically complete. By-laws were drawn up, guaranteeing the women a tolerable life. A small police force was detailed for service at this centre. Properly fed, and with interesting recreations provided for them, a dressmaking unit established, and other similar things, this colony began to turn out a high average of attractive women.

In discussing this new factor, and the excellent body of women that they were getting together, Sammael and Pullman looked into the future.

"Fire off the Girls—Discharge the Girls—and see the results!" was Pullman's pasquinaderie.

"How about appearing with a woman, sir, yourself!" Pullman insinuated.

Entering into the spirit of the Fiesta, Sammael decided to do just this.

A young American octaroon of surpassing beauty was chosen. "Naturally," said the bridegroom-to-be to Pullman, "there will be no *actual* marriage. It will only look well in the car with me. To marry a negress would be unthinkable. But this girl, with a white hibiscus in her oily raven hair, is just the thing for the occasion. We will dance the rumba together."

"That is the idea!" Pullman applauded. "It will be terrific."

As the day approached Sammael received visits from leading angels, from as far as five hundred miles away. They wished to discuss this extraordinary move with the Devil, whom they had always regarded as a diehard reactionary. The majority left Sammael convinced revolutionaries.

"As once before, and as always, Sammael is profoundly right," one of them was heard to say, as he got into his car. These words, in large type, Pullman had printed upon a propaganda sheet, over the visiting angel's wellknown name, and distributed everywhere.

"Why, Pullman, you limb of the Devil, I see your finger everywhere!" blustered the Bailiff. "If you had worked for me as you are working now for Sammael, we should still be in Third City!"

The protests of the reactionary angels sounded antediluvian, when they sometimes bobbed up, with armchair arguments, in the midst of this irresistible flood of popular enthusiasm.

Pullman, as may be imagined, spent a great deal of time in the technical details of the coming grand display. He had not only a car, but an excellent chauffeur. In it they toured from one end of the angel community to the other. He arranged for truckfuls of women to be brought from the revolutionary angel settlements, where already there were a great many girls, half-angel and half-human. These girls were all of them interviewed by agents of his and it was explained to them—in, of course, a guarded way—what was expected of them. They were told that many of the angels in Angeltown were desirous of marrying; that they had fine houses and, often, certain resources, and what better could a girl do than look them over. This would be her opportunity.

Then there were lorries put aside for display purposes, by Pullman and others, for he had a sizable staff—all angel-speaking naturally. Merely to indicate the kind of thing that was being engineered, there were band wagons, so-called floats, juggernauts of flowers, and so forth.

A brigade of young men was recruited from among those young fellows, of half-angel, half-human parentage, of athletic interests. They were dressed in white cotton garments, with whitened faces and large black patches, with a white rimless hat, with a pompom at its apex, strapped beneath the chin. These bands of young men were armed with short sticks to which large elongated bladders were attached by a stout cord. This was a rough Pierrot uniform. Their function was to tour Angeltown, full of good-humoured laughter, delivering light taps on the head with their bladders. They were advised especially to look out for angels armed in the same way, and

engage in comic duels. Thousands of these bladders were being manufactured, and would be sold throughout Angeltown on the day preceding the Fiesta.

Factories were busy in the big manufacturing town, making masks, postiche noses, and all the machinery of carnival. Thousands of little musical instruments, productive of a great deal of noise, clappers, squirts, and every contrivance for arming the masqueraders with harmless but entertaining devices for contacting one another, were being turned out. Every sort of disguise was provided, from animal heads, of which there were a great assortment, to grimacing human faces. With these went a variety of objects for producing snorts and squeals, growls and howls, and other noises. Pullman had a rehearsal, a week beforehand, and he was well satisfied with his preparations. He reported to Sammael all that was being done, and was much complimented by his master upon his zeal in giving shape to the coming Fiesta. With Schlank, who came from Munich, he discussed the Munich Carnival or Fasching, comparing it with what happened at Cologne, a city in which Pullman had experienced a carnival. "I do not see quite how these great lumps of men," so said Pullman, "can ever be made to fling themselves about, in a carnivalesque manner." But Schlank disagreed. "No", he told his friend. "No, no, you will find that these giants will behave like kittens. Bang them on the head with a bladder, and they will go mad with delight. Tickle their necks with one of your 'Ladies' Tiddlers', and they will skip and squeal like two-year-olds. It will be a revelation for you! These enormous men are great big babies. The only thing is that there is a danger: these powerful animals may become too hysterical, they may go berserk in their playfulness."

Pullman was thoughtful at this point. "I have millions of police," he told Schlank.

Schlank shook his head. "One angel is worth a hundred human policemen, my dear Pullman. The strength, the physical strength, of an angel is terrifying. You must not tickle them *too much*. You are going to have a problem there. The Fiesta may turn into a riot. Are the police armed?"

Pullman nodded.

"If I were you I would only arm a select, very intelligent, inner circle of police. This would be an ultimate reserve, in

case things went very wrong. There is such a thing as the bad angel. He is a great nuisance, but the other angels know how to deal with him. Beware the bad angel, my dear Pullman."

Pullman looked very grave. "Schlank, you terrify me. I shall have to talk to Sammael about the bad angel."

"Do not quote *me*," Schlank pointed at himself.

"Put your mind at rest, my dear. I should not dream of quoting you. Our conversations are a strictly private matter (in German)."

The next morning Pullman was seeing Sammael, and during their talk he expressed himself as greatly alarmed by the problem of the "bad angel".

"You mean the drunken angel, or the angel when drunk?" said Sammael.

"No, sir. I am assuming that most angels, when intoxicated, know how to behave themselves. By 'bad angel' I mean that small percentage of the criminal or violent to be found in any community."

"I do not think, Pullman, that there are enough angels of that type to constitute a problem. The police will supply you with all protection that is required."

"I did not think that the human police would be a match for angelic disorder."

Sammael laughed good-humouredly. "The bullets of the Fifth Regiment of Police will be quite able to cope with any angelic rascality."

The pooh-poohing of this subject by Sammael did not relieve Pullman's anxiety. Alcohol would be very abundant, and he felt that the Prince of Darkness did not at all appreciate the position of a human individual surrounded by thousands of creatures much larger than himself, deprived of all checks, and, among them, some vicious and malevolent. He felt that, by his universal activity, he had, to some extent, made himself responsible for the Fiesta; and he did not feel that bullets were any solution of angelic criminality and limitless alcohol. Eventually he persuaded Sammael to recruit a small body of angels, to supply them with uniforms, and to arm them. All the human police patrolling Angeltown during the Fiesta were provided with shrill whistles, to be used in case of trouble. The angelic police squad was to remain stationed at the centre of the city; and a highpowered truck

was placed at their disposal. These steps taken, Pullman's mind was at ease.

As, sometimes, Pullman would sit above the little park with Schlank, a wine-dinner having filled them both with a student's exuberance, "Im Rhein, im heiligen Strome" would ring out, the giant stars shining down inquiringly in their faces. Pullman had taught his German friend the words, and, their eyes dancing, they would, line by line, half say it, half sing it to one another:

'da spiegelt sich in den Well'n,
mit seinen grossen Dome
das grosse heilige Kōln;

es schweben Blumen und Englein,
um unsere liebe Frau,
die Augen, die Lippen, die Wänglein,
die gleichen der Liebsten genau.'

But even on such occasions Pullman's mind remained, in its ultimate recesses, unquiet, although most harassments had been satisfactorily dealt with. He could not drive away the sense of sin which he experienced, as aider and abettor of his Diabolic Majesty. He was so familiar with Sammael that it was very difficult to think of him as the traditional enemy of his one-time God, with whom he was now carrying on a clandestine flirtation. What would this *Allmächtiger* divinity think of him if he could know (as of course he might) of Pullman's counsellings of Satan. Often he dreaded some such awareness. Counsels of his, dozens of them, had been taken up and put into operation, by his disreputable Master. How would all that look in his personal dossier upon the Day of Judgement? As butlers sometimes did, in announcing an honoured guest, there would be a dreadful unction, perhaps, in the tones of the angel recording his feats. No, Pullman was anything but comfortable; and he often would whisper to Schlank his misgivings about his rôle in this community, and confess how frightened he was at times.

## XV

On the morning of the Fiesta the sun was not very high in the sky when the festivities began. The first sign that this was no ordinary day was the monster cracker exploding in the middle of the city, followed by the discharge of a thousand rockets, fanning outwards in all directions and bursting far up in the sky with a scarlet incandescence, which shed a bright red glow throughout the city, looking like the reflection of the flames of a great conflagration. In five or ten minutes the bombardment was renewed, but this time it was not a concentrated scarlet effulgence, but a rain of rockets of all colours, which ended with a dull bang. Then four bands, of the noisiest brass, and each with its big contingent of drums, started to march outwards from the centre to East, West, North and South. Like Frederick the Great's drummers, sent to beat an "Out-of-Bed" outside the bedrooms of all the members of the household, these ear-splitting bands were designed as a wakener, to bring all the angels out of their slumber. The Fifth Regiment of Police was encamped outside the city, and its two bands entered Angelsway at opposite ends, and with a martial frenzy began to march towards the centre. Once there, they maintained an uproar for the next hour or so.

The entire city was soon out of doors. Vans with loudspeakers moved in all directions, a voice of great volume bellowing at the just-wakened, and not-yet-breakfasted citizenry; "A jolly morning to you, my children! A joking, jolly, a jittercracking day to you!"

After ten minutes or so of jittercracking, half the angels went back to bed. The other half shouted, "Is *that* jittercracking" and put the morning kettle on to boil, and when the boil had come, sat down to a jittercracking breakfast, the police bands going on with their jittercracking music.

On the roof of Haus Europa Pullman cracked his hands together, for he felt that the Fiesta had gone off with a jittercrack, not to say a bang. Schlank entered the room, exclaiming "Congratulations!" and he cracked his friend on the back. But

Satters, seeing this, landed such a jittercrack on Schlank's back that he regretted his incautious exuberance.

Not so long after this, thousands of visitors arriving from the neighbouring city and beyond, in huge brakes, began streaming into Angeltown. Several of the sports centres had been transformed into dancing places, and already dance music sounded there, inviting the newcomers to a tango or a rumba. Hundreds of men and women were soon rolling or stalking round; and when Pullman arrived in his official car he found all the bands controlling the movements of a good number of strangers to the city. Having moved around to assure himself that the catering services were functioning as they should, he told his chauffeur to drive him from one end to the other of Angelsway, to inspect the troupes of dancers which he had organised. Five young Spanish women were the first he met with. Two of these squinted, but the other three were quite attractive. Their sins had been forgiven, on the understanding that they would dance at the Fiesta. Spanish national costumes had been rapidly made ready. Two young athletes also were found who were trained for a Spanish act, and they stamped and struck attitudes most satisfactorily. Three young bandsmen provided a very Spanish noise, one wielding an instrument similar to a guitar. The women paraded up and down, swaying their hips and whirling their castanets. A considerable audience had already collected on the sidewalks. A few hundred yards farther on came a group of little French men and women. They discovered folkvoices of average quality. Costumes approximating to those of the French seventeenth century embellished them; the girls looked as innocent as the Spanish dancers looked the reverse—all they had to do was to look innocent and to sing in child voices. Instead of the barbaric assault of drums and castanets, here, with the supposed French couples, was the tender pipe of the *bergère* and the sentimental tenor of the shepherd-lad or the young 'prentice or mariner.

The idea of these groups had been Pullman's. The next group he met with on this tour of inspection was a mixed Irish and Scottish troupe of dancers and singers suitably dressed. "We are the Boys of Wexford," they bravely sang; meanwhile a piper marched in a wide circle a few yards farther on, producing a never-ceasing, tuneless drone. This

musician was an object of great interest; Pullman noticed one angel busily writing, as well as drawing, in a little book.

The creator of all these specimens of national musical energy pressed forward in his car, remaining a few minutes near each group in turn. He heard the Swiss group yodel, he mentally applauded the Germans, garish and bony-kneed, who poured out a stream of melodies, some of them great favourites with Schlank. He was really astonished at the succes of the Greeks, who had little stiff skirts and white gaitered legs, bristling with knives; they danced, and sang at the same time with a tinkly sweetness. The music of the Magyars, to which these nationals danced with a reckless savagery, whirling their arms above their heads, was able to impress all the angels in the neighbourhood. Lastly came the cowboys, who sang toughly and sentimentally, of the corral, of the Sierra, and of their breaking hearts. The firearms and spectacular knives they all carried appeared to daunt the angelic spectators. Pullman shouted, "Don't shoot, boys!", but one of them misinterpreted (perhaps wilfully) this order. He drew a gun and blazed away in the air. All the angels vanished with miraculous speed. The various local colours were paraded, and stuck out against the abstraction of the angel nature. Meanwhile woman, attractively dressed, insinuated herself into the heart of Angeltown.

Pullman was conscious of a general uproar—bands and fireworks and the roaring of the huge angels, a jittercracking scene in short. He looked up, and the sky was full of gorgeous kites; horsemen rode past with a large stiff sheet grasped in their hands, which they stopped to read in a stentorian voice periodically—announcing the events of the day.

EVENTS.

Noon. Massed Bands.
1 p.m. Gala Lunch.
2.30 Tennis Championship.
3.30 Water Polo at Pool. Sports Centre.
Sporting Events at Sports Centre.
5.0 Presentation Prizes in Angels' Hall.
Prizes to be distributed by President (the lord Sammael).
6.0 Dancing begins. The Markets Gala Floor.

7.0 Dinner served, in Gala Hall, and in the Booths A B C and D.

9.0 Dance opened at Markets Floor by Lord President.

The climax was at midnight, with the Massed Musical Celebration of the *fiançailles* of the lord Sammael.

Followed at 12.30:

Kermess—Angelsway.

The picturesque horsemen, after "crying" this programme, scattered a printed sheet in great numbers; this was freely distributed at stands in various conspicuous places.

Before leaving that morning to see that all the troupes were playing their parts, Pullman had a chat with Dr Schlank.

Just before he left he delivered himself as follows.

"I am confident of the success of this Fiesta. The only thing I do not feel certain about is the response of these titans to the lure of the women who are being scattered among them. Sammael, the leading tempter (although he will not go through with it himself), will dance the rumba with his supposed fiancée. That lady will roll her hips in the most inflammatory way. But what has to be proved is whether the angels' genitals, extinct for so many thousands of years, are not extinct for good. I feel very doubtful, myself, whether there is a spark of life left. Except that things *will*, in the end, function, as evidenced by the number of married angels, three or four hundred miles away, I have no statistics as to how long it takes to ignite this rusty machine."

"Go on with you! Angeltown is full of lusty young fellows —it will be instantaneous, you will see!" shouted Schlank, stamping about lustily to help Pullman understand the jitter-cracking lustiness of the angels.

Sammael had made Pullman a necessary present when the little car was pushed one day in front of Haus Europa. He learned to drive it in a few weeks, though half the time he had his chauffeur at the wheel in sheer brashness. Now, as they began to drive up Angelsway, he stopped the car outside a house from which came the sound of choral singing. It was the Angeltown choir, which was to compete that afternoon for a money-prize; and as he listened to the stately chant he thought how staggering the effects would be in a large London

church, perhaps Westminster Cathedral, if it possessed such a choir as this, which was thunderous, of tremendous weight, and of perfect beauty. He prayed that they might win the prize. Reluctantly he proceeded, and, just beyond the market, pathetically weak after the choir music, rose the wail of a Scottish pipe. However, the group from which it came was so gallant and gay that visually he considered it a great success. He called out a few words in Erse, and received a response from an authentic Irishman they had unearthed, a very poor specimen, just about to die for the most unsuitable sin. He had lost an ear, but he began to sing "Sweet Molly Malone" as if he had two ears. On this second excursion of Pullman's he found that his car had to force its way through a thick stream of sightseers, and the early thickening of the pedestrian streams by floats, bandwagons and juggernauts of shouting beauties. He left it to his chauffeur to guide them, while he sat in the back. Everywhere he observed angels chattering and shouting, discharging crackers and flying kites, joining in the choruses of the songs of the various troupes, and of angel choristers who had begun touring from house to house. At last, beyond where the orange and silver fountains were splashing, Pullman reached a large crowd of giant angels, all attempting to sing a *Habanera*; and there, strutting up and down, like a marionette, compared with this gigantic audience, was a brilliantly handsome Spanish woman; she raised the castanets, and, to the rolling and hammering of the instruments, began a slow dance, in which the ability of the centre of her body to simulate the slowly heaving motion of the most professional love, drew the solemn attention of the audience. Pullman waited for the *dénouement*. A big fellow in black tights, and black silken Spanish hat, with a strap beneath the tip of the chin, stamped and assumed attitudes reminiscent of the dancers of Badajos or of Valencia, rigid and awkward-looking, ritualistic. The girl intensified the act, in front of the stiff and stamping black monster, until in the wildest manner she ended the dance, stomach forward and quivering, eyes closed. Then, at a swaying gait, she retired to her stool.

Most of the angels stood with mouths open as usual, and eyes half closed. They greeted the final scene with an enormous and rather terrifying shout. Pullman saw some of them

watching the girl swaying back to her stool. He observed the expression of these very carefully; at last he saw one pass his tongue around his upper lip. He interpreted this as a satisfactory sign.

A military band approached, playing "Ich hat'n Kamerad". Angelsway was so wide that there would have been room for two more bands to have fitted in between the Spanish troupe and the military. On a visit to a second French troupe (for Pullman had duplicated the troupes, and, in some cases, triplicated), he found "Au clair de la lune" being wonderfully well warbled; this was like holding up a wax vesta in the blazing sun of jitter-crackery in excelsis. He next made a wide sweep until he reached the limits of the town, and found everywhere swarms of people moving in to what was structurally the centre of the communal life. He stopped before Sammael's house, and a servant ran out to meet him. "The lord Sammael left this note for you, sir."

He opened the envelope, and found that it contained an invitation to lunch with Sammael at one o'clock at the Gala Luncheon, Table A 1. Pullman now returned to Haus Europa.

Satters was at the flat, but preparing to go down to the young gardener with whom he worked. They were going up to the Sports Centre together to watch the tennis, water polo and other sporting events. Pullman warned him against boisterous behaviour, but Satters' response was that he knew how to behave as well as any of *his* friends. He was going to have a "Gala" lunch—he hoped that *he* (Pullman) would behave *himself*.

Pullman went in to have a drink with Schlank. That good man was not going out till the evening. "Then I shall walk up to the Market Dances, and dance with an angel if I see one I know."

Pullman gave a brief report of the response of the angel spectators at a most inflammatory dance performed by a woman.

"A large crowd studied her stylistic demonstration of the sexual act with rapt attention, one angel was seen to lick his lip."

"It will soon be the new sport of the playboys of Angeltown, I wager you," laughed Schlank. "We have about a

thousand women, or perhaps a few hundred more. But there are thirty thousand angels to supply with brides."

Pullman pretended to tear his hair. However, Schlank rejected the meaning of this dumb show.

"You will find, Pullman, that this original thousand will grow by leaps and bounds. You will soon have ten, then twenty, then thirty thousand. You will find it amazing the way in which women multiply."

"Optimist!"

"You will see."

"We have, after all, only Sinners to draw on. What will result from the love transports of animated corpses and angels I do not know; but to build up a body of effective women must take a long time."

"Well, Pullman, you old pessimist, animated corpses as we are, we have a fair amount of life in us, don't you think?" The great physicist squeezed Pullman's hand, and stamped loudly on the floor.

At the Gala Lunch Pullman thought he had never been present at a more dazzling spectacle. It took place in a very large marquee, open on two sides, with buzzing ventilation fans circulating the air, and successfully moderating the afternoon temperature. Most of the men were dressed in a substance resembling white drill. There were masses of flowers everywhere, the waiters were jacketed in scarlet, and an orchestra, in a pale blue uniform, played an unaggressive pianissimo accompaniment to the lunch, upon a dais at one extremity of the marquee. There were a certain number of women present —wives and daughters of notables in the lower town and those accompanying some representative angels from the distant township where the angelic emancipators lived. There was a numerous contingent from Birapolis—all open-minded, and preparing to take wives themselves.

The fiancée of the lord Sammael was beside him at his left hand at lunch, and Pullman was placed beyond her. To the right of Sammael was a visitor angel from the manufacturing centre, this angel being a big factory owner. He was reported to be the richest member of the angel community—next to Sammael of course.

Pullman was struck by the uniformity of the large oval

angel heads, all the way round the tables (of which there were fifteen); all with round open mouths, and the enormous black eyes.

The "fiancée" was dressed with full feminine éclat, a gown of silver lamé, a pink and white flower in her dense black hair. She was a tall girl, a mate for an angel. Her face had nothing of the coarseness of the negro, her eyes were like glistening black stones, which it seemed possible to stroke, as she fixed their gaze upon a point a little beneath her. She spoke an American of the softest, agreeably slow without degenerating into a drawl.

She and Sammael were playing splendidly together; great beauty as she was, she was able to do so. She melted—she basked; the great fiancé touched her glass with his: as she drank she gazed luxuriously at him over the effervescing liquid. What was going to happen afterwards? Sammael had given a little thought to that when he was having a discussion one day with Pullman. He said that he supposed he would have to have her shot, in say about a month. "Oh no, sir," Pullman had protested. "People would bring it up against you. Remember that women have a different status now. Also, you must not make it too obvious that you were fooling them." But Sammael had answered that he would say that he was haunted by the thought of her dreadful crimes (she had murdered three women).

"Ah, James, what are you thinking about?" she asked. (Today she called Pullman James; before many hours had passed it would be Jim.)

"Nothing very much," Pullman answered. "Nothing very much, except how beautiful you are."

"Am I, James? Tell me, can you speak this language?"

"I speak it a little."

"What do these people say about me, James?"

"If you could understand it you would not be unflattered."

"What kind of things do they say?"

"The men say that you are beautiful, the women say you have eyes like a snake."

"Which one, James?" she inquired, fixing her eye upon a young woman on the other side of the table.

Pullman, seeing this, hastened to say that it was no one at this table.

"If Sammael were so foolish as to convert this into an authentic *fiançailles*," said Pullman to himself, "he would have his arms full, not to say his hands. But he will have her shot. It is quiete certain that a bullet (no doubt at Dis) will spare Sammael the boring entanglements implied in this beauteous but outrageously jealous personality." For Sammael was as cold as ice in his response to this femininity.

There were speeches, the first a dazzling oration by Sammael. How tremendously good-looking he was, as he stood there dominating his fellow angels by his combination of legendary beauty and matchless intelligence—yet how false, thought Pullman. This was merely a defiance of God. In Sammael's heart there was no great purpose, but the old, cold pride. He was resolved to explode the supernatural, ultimately to make an end of God. He wished to bring Heaven crashing down. He was now arranging for the contamination of the angel nature—for the destruction of something which had endured since the beginning of time. He was going to mix it up with the pettiness and corruption of mankind. He had built for it, in Angeltown, a sort of comic Hollywood. Now he was forcing upon it woman—with all her sexishness, her nursery-mind, her vulgarity. Pullman, as he sat there watching this indestructible, triumphant, Number One Beauty, was smitten with a revelation. To save his skin, he had been actively assisting at the annihilation of the Divine.

In Third City, he had slid into the pit dug for him, as it were, by the Bailiff—in a cigarette-blessed amnesia, haunted by that faint stink which had always assailed his nostrils in the reception hall of the Bailiff, whose parties always contained intruders from Hell, and of which he was reminded by a subtle effluvium at present reaching him from one of the ladies of the Dis big-wigs sitting on his left. At this moment his eyes rested upon the Bailiff himself, at the next table, he had not noticed him before. The Bailiff was looking at him. As their eyes met the Gay Monster winked. He lowered his eyes. He felt sure that the Gay Monster, the little elephant, had read his thoughts—his face must have betrayed at that moment, at last, the eruption, the revelation, taking place in his mind.

But Sammael had sat down and a violent applause had detonated all round Pullman. Since it was not he who was

being applauded, Pullman almost jumped up in the air and began to clap, and to clap, and to clap—until he realized that he *alone* was clapping.

He stopped.

Everyone was looking at him.

"Oh, James, you are wound up aren't you?" the indolent voice was ironically murmuring. "What was it wound you up like that, James?"

Sammael was smiling at him, from behind his indolent fiancée.

"I'm sorry I made a fool of myself, sir. But I went on thinking of what you had said in your wonderful speech, sir, and I had not noticed that the applause had ceased."

"I am glad you approved of what I said, Pullman. We must have a talk afterwards."

What did he want to talk to him about? Had *he* read his thoughts as well? Pullman was back again—in the company of his terrors, of the first weeks of his stay in this place. It took him some minutes to shake this off.

"James, you are the most thoughtful of men," came the voice. "You look as if you had . . ."

Evidently her fiancé is neglecting her, so it is up to me, thought Pullman.

From then until the end of lunch he did his best to amuse her. She rewarded him by calling him Jim. "That was a crack coming from you, Jim: makes me feel, Jim, that you're more awake than you look." It had hardly been a "crack" but she had drunk several glasses of the wine of the country, and she was prepared to laugh at anything. Then, she hoped to make her fiancé jealous, to show him and other people how high-spirited she was. When lunch was over Sammael was so much in demand that he asked Pullman to look after his "fiancée", until he could escape. Pullman said they would be at the fountain, just outside the marquee.

As they strolled out into the sunlight, Pullman chatted pleasantly. "Your fiancé is one of the busiest men you could find anywhere. He has started a new policy, very revolutionary, and everybody is very excited. They all want to know how it is going to affect him—or her. He is going to find it difficult to get away."

"That may be so," she said slowly, "but his being a fiancé

does not seem to agitate him very much. They say that he is a woman-hater down at Dis. I am wondering . . ."

"Well, you must not do that," Pullman told her. "He fell in love with you in the middle of a crisis."

"*In love!* Say, Jim, have you ever been in love?"

"No, not really," he said.

"Then it's no use asking you."

"What?" asked Pullman.

"Oh nothing," she said. "You wouldn't know what love looked like, then."

"I am not an expert about love. But I think I know what you mean. Well, Sammael is a terribly shy man. To make an exhibition of himself is the kind of thing he fears."

"Oh yeah."

"All these people are watching him expectantly," said Pullman. "Watching, whispering."

"They'll have to do a lot of watching, Jim, to catch his hand clutching mine under the tablecloth, or to catch a furtive glance out of the corner of his eye . . ."

"Sammael is a great gentleman . . ."

"Is that what you call it. Say, if no one was looking, would he steal a kiss?"

Pullman was, of course, quite sure that he wouldn't, but that, in the first place, he would never be alone.

"I can only make one answer to that: namely, that *any* man would do it."

"You are a diplomat, Jim," she said.

At that moment, unexpectedly, the dashing Highland bonnet of the fiancé appeared.

"How I got away, don't ask me. I literally tore myself from the wife of the face-surgeon in chief. What was going to become of plastic-surgeons, she would like to know. And she had seven children . . . I told her that so great a technician would always be in an enviable position."

They were moving towards the car, fairly quickly. But a woman seized him by the arm. A few moments later he caught up with Pullman and his fiancée.

"Same question," he said. "I shall not be able to appear in public . . ."

The fiancée forced her way in between Pullman and Sammael and very firmly took the latter by the arm.

"And while you're in my company, Sam, you will have to touch me occasionally." And she walked very close indeed to the "great gentleman".

Sammael beamed all over his face, stroked her hand upon his arm—Pullman believed for a moment that he was going to take her in his arms. "My *darling*. And to think that all these beastly women keep me from you!" As all three got into the automobile he very ostentatiously held her around the shoulders, and kissed her at the corner of the mouth, just clear of the lipstick. "I hope no one is looking."

"Ha ha ha!" Pullman supplied the necessary laugh—the very necessary laugh, he felt.

The car was open, and they drove away amid cheers and waving hands.

"Is it not wonderful!" Sammael exclaimed brilliantly, thrillingly.

"Isn't it just wonderful," acknowledged the fiancée. The ironic ring was noticed by Sammael. ("You will be lucky," thought Pullman, looking towards the lovely octaroon, "if you get off with a firing squad.") But the lord Sammael squeezed the necessary hand, and was squeezed warmly in return, and there can be no irony in so warm a squeeze.

"How lovely you are," the fiancé cried, looking into Pullman's eyes as he said it.

Near the centre of Angelsway they were held up by a cheering crowd. Sammael stood up in the car, under a shower of confetti and roses. He waved and kissed his hands, shouting greetings.

He dragged up his fiancée, who stood at his side beneath a downpour of flakes of coloured paper, which filled her ears, clung all over her face, penetrated her hair, and left deposits inside the neckline of her frock.

She was holding loads of flowers which were thrust at her (thrusts which were sometimes slightly indecent, Pullman believed). And then, with gestures of an extravagant ardour, Sammael took her in his arms and kissed her on the cheek, as near as possible to the mouth.

"Kiss me! Kiss me!" he hissed.

The "fiancée" threw her arms around his neck and imprinted a big carmine, Max Factor kiss all over his mouth.

The cheers were hysterical. There were men and women

at the side of the car, locked in burning embraces. Pullman saw many angels embracing one another—either from want of a woman or homosexually, Pullman did not know. Suddenly Pullman was embraced by a rather good-looking town girl, held up, to allow her to do this, by an angel.

This scene continued for rather too long. The crowd grew: it began to seem unlikely that they would ever be able to escape.

However, three or four of the angels constituted themselves crowd-breakers, and the car slowly followed them until there was much less pressure and it could advance by itself. All the way they were slowed down by demonstrations, and Sammael never ceased to smile, to kiss his fiancée on the cheek, to stand up and to sit down, while Pullman baled out the confetti. There was an unbreakable blockage, from side to side of Angelsway, when they reached the Spanish dancers. The car retreated—as far as the last crossroad, and passed around the block, and it did not take them long to reach Sammael's house. They all went inside, shook out the confetti, and washed their hands. Then, in a very tender voice the fiancé said to the fiancée, "I am sure you must be terribly tired, darling, aren't you?"

The woman violently protested that her freshness was unimpaired—that *she* didn't want a rest: but he would not hear of it. "You could lie down upstairs. No. No! Better not do that. They would be sure to say that we had gone to bed already. Come along—I will take you to your hotel."

She had to be practically carried to the car, her protests rising to a shriek.

"Jim! Can't you stop him? He wants to put me to bed."

But Pullman answered, "This is going on all night. You *must* rest."

Her "hotel" turned out to be Mark's lodging-house. Mark took over from Sammael, and the last Pullman saw of the fiancée was a bitter struggle at the front door, in which Mark was attempting to force her through it from behind.

The lord Sammael, as they were driving away, drew air into his lungs and blew it out expressively.

"*What* a female!" cried the exasperated fiancé. "I must have her shot at once—once this farce is over. Woman, in the raw, is an embarrassment. I marvel that men do not lose their

reason who have to *live* with those fantastic bellowing babies." He blew again. "I want to see the tennis, Pullman—or Jim, as she calls you! Will you come along?"

Nothing that had occurred since the lunch had done anything to lessen the acuity of the mental revolution which had occurred during Sammael's speech. The fiancée filled him with horror. But what was Sammael doing but imposing this horror (more or less) upon fellow-angels, while refusing genuinely to take on a woman himself. What could have been more disgusting than those public kissings and squeezings, the scattering of the fingertip kisses among the crowds, with whom he was so popular? He was a "great gentleman", yes, compared with the Bailiff: and this acted as a camouflage—but what he *did* was even more sinister. Pullman accepted the invitation to accompany him to the Tennis Tournament, nevertheless. He could not stop seeing Sammael, and live. Besides, the spectacle of this titanic tennis interested him.

The tennis was so fast and fierce that it was quite a different game from what is seen at Wimbledon. The rackets were larger, the balls slightly larger and considerably heavier. Players were not infrequently seriously injured.—The Singles Champion of Angeltown defeated the star of the great manufacturing city. First the star was disposed of, a ball discharged with almost the speed of light hitting the back of his head, and causing a concussion. The weaker player who took his place was easily defeated.

The lord Sammael was photographed arm-in-arm with the Champion. They then hurried to the water-polo. There Sammael was photographed arm-in-arm with the Champion, in this case, an angel from the same district as the injured tennis player. He was the Captain; his team was festooned behind the principals in the photograph.

After the water-polo Pullman returned to the Haus Europa, where he fell asleep immediately.

At five he was awakened by Borp, who brought the tea into the bedroom.

"You must be tired, sir," he remarked. "I saw you, sir, in the car with the lord Sammael and his fiancée."

"Ah," said Pullman. "What did the crowd say about it all?"

"They are very enthusiastic, sir, very enthusiastic. She is a beautiful lady, is she not? But there were some who said that

they did not believe that she loved him, sir, or that he really seemed to love *her*. Excuse me, sir, I only repeat what some said. There was *one* man—a surgeons' aid from Dis, sir, an old friend of mine—said that she was a murderess."

"A murderess?" said Pullman frowning.

Borp lowered his voice. "I should not have repeated this, sir, but the friend I met was wondering whether the lord Sammael knew."

Pullman stared, in silence, at his house-boy, while he thought: "What a divinely simple way out for the fiancé! 'I discovered that she was a murderess.'"

Pullman remained on the bed to drink his tea. The rumour would spread like wild fire. What steps should he take? Then he sprang up impulsively and rushed into the kitchen.

"Borp! The lord Sammael must know about this."

"That's what I thought, sir."

He ran dramatically to the telephone: he rang Sammael's office, and he experienced an unpleasant shock to hear his patron's deep and excited voice at the other end.

Speaking in German, in a tremulous voice, Pullman said: "You know my house-boy, Borp, he has just told me something terrible—terrible. When he was in the crowd, after seeing you in your car, an old friend who works at Dis told him that . . ."

"I know, Pullman—it was reported to me a half-hour ago. That is why I am at present in my office. Listen, Pullman. Punishment Police are, I hope, *now* at Mark's. An ambulance will fellow. The police have orders to dope her at once—we don't want her caterwauling everywhere. She will be taken to a cell of the Secret Service and held *incommunicado*. She will not be shot. The Secret Service will dispose of her. S.S. Agents are looking for the Department Head involved. He was at the lunch. Of course he should have informed me. He—and others too—must be punished—in the most absolute way. Pullman, will you come up here—by a side street: goodbye—I must telephone Mark."

"Shall I ever escape from the importunities of this man!" Pullman put his hand over his forehead. Then he slowly took his hand off again, and dropped it to his side. "What a dirty little *ham* I am," he whispered. "Gratuitously putting on an act to shield my boss. Am I paid for this?"

Borp had been standing at the door of the kitchen all the time; always in the corner of Pullman's eye. He was, of course, greatly excited by this scandal in high places, and was much impressed by Pullman's performance.

"Borp," Pullman said at last, "the lord Sammael knows. He heard half an hour ago. He has already acted. I should not tell you. But the murderess has been arrested, and other people too. The lord Sammael *was not informed.* It is terrible."

And Pullman took his hat and in a moment was gone. Borp, his mouth open, stood looking at the door through which his impetuous master had disappeared.

Pullman had not got very far on his way to Sammael when he heard something remarkably like firing, over to the leftward of Angelsway, in a direction little known to him. Then he encountered a crowd-pressure, and two angels were shouting, "A battle—a big battle!"

His chauffeur turned the car round towards the centre of disturbance. The first thing he came upon was a large placard up against a tree. In giant letters he read:

DOWN WITH THE
JITTERCRACKING
ICONOCLAST

Beside it, a steel-helmeted group of the Fifth Regiment of Police, their bayoneted rifles slung over their shoulders, or held at the ready, stood guard over a larger but disreputable group of bandaged men. The London handcuff is discreet and of a modest proportion; but these prisoners had at their wrists spectacular steel manacles.

Pullman and his chauffeur pressed on. Soon they came to a street across which stood two armoured police trucks, about a hundred yards down from the point at which they were crossing it. Against the truck-sides was a rattle of bullets, and, in the distance, a corresponding rattle of machine-gun fire. There was also an unfamiliar sound in the air; it was the whistle of bullets. Up the side street were some officers; one smoked a cigarette, as they talked beneath the trees. Pullman stopped his car beside them. He learned that a "sort of revolution" was apparently occurring.

"We have them held," said one of the officers. "It is just

over there." He pointed up the street across which the police trucks had been stationed. "There are not many of them—perhaps a couple of hundred. Our five police regiments are massing around them. We have them held. The artillery of the Fifth Police Regiment is bombarding a house, which is, we think, their headquarters. We will soon have knocked it to pieces."

"Good," said Pullman. "Does the lord Sammael know? I am just on my way to him."

"Yes, the lord Sammael knows. He was under fire a few moments ago . . . He was not hit."

"Thank you, sir." He told the chauffeur to get to Sammael's house as rapidly as possible, and, as they reached the first turning, they heard the fire from the howitzers of the Fifth Police Regiment, and the rattle of machine-guns. They took the opposite road to this, and all the way along found groups of angels standing outside their houses, still holding on to kites, or with coloured bladders in their hands, listening to the fire of the artillery. A little further, excited crowds were gathered at the cross-roads, and then they met trucks full of steel-helmeted police hurrying to the scene of action.

Near Sammael's house Pullman found his great patron in consultation with Zoë, or the little elephant—who wore a steel helmet and had a martial look. Pullman drew up and left his car.

"Well, sir!" he exclaimed, "what is all this?"

"It is a rascal called Lorter Bobrag. He has always been in touch with Heaven; we have had him down as a miscreant, as a confirmed mischief-maker, for a long time. This fellow has collected a hundred or two of the easily led; he has armed them, and obviously other people are interested. There is capital, a little bit of money, behind it. We shall soon have them all under lock and key, except those who are dead."

"You were under fire, sir? Some police officers, met with just behind the firing line, told me about it."

Sammael pointed to a gash in his jacket. "They sent a couple of thugs up here. Our police chased them."

The ex-Bailiff moved off briskly, strutting a little. He was leading his private army of detectives and Secret Service men, in two or three trucks, down to the disturbed area, with hundreds of manacles in one of the trucks. With him, in his

car, were two private secretaries (both steel helmeted), each with his ledger under his arm, and a pistol at his belt. Blasting at their horns, this flotilla of bravos departed.

About a hundred armed police were stationed before Sammael's house. Inside there were more police. At last Sammael and his visitor reached the most secret of his studies. When Sammael had taken his seat, and Pullman his, the former rang for a servant, and summoned persons who had been awaiting his instructions. Two confidential agents of the Bailiff's service entered.

They stood in front of the lord Sammael without speaking.

"You are armed?" Sammael asked. "Good! Go to his house, knock, and when he comes to the door, kill him."

"If his wife is there?"

"Kill her too. They have long tongues."

The two agents left the room. These agents had been carefully picked by the Bailiff, and it was certain that, if the condemned man was there, he would die.

Sammael turned hectically to Pullman, who had never seen him like this before. It was as if he had been drinking heavily. His face was pale and he was swollen beneath the eyes. He was, however, complete master of himself. He had been very much disturbed, most recently, of course, by the ugly comedy of the "revolt". The agony of rage had distorted his face.

"Pullman, it is all over Angeltown—'Sammael's wife-to-be is a murderess'. They also say she is a negress." He sat staring at his visitor.

"I wish I had brought Borp here. Other spectators—the majority who had not yet heard about the rumours from Dis—said that your fiancée did not love you, and that you did not seem to love her."

After about a minute's silence, Sammael said, "That does not help, does it? Except that they might say that I had felt that there was something the matter with her . . ."

"Exactly!"

"However can I save myself from disgrace? The point is that they say I knew that she was a murderess. *That* is what matters."

"You exaggerate the *eventual* effect. A booklet must be written, in which the true story must be set down. I think it might be as well to preface it by saying that the real truth

was this beautiful girl was not someone with whom you had fallen in love, but that you ardently desired to participate in these revolutionary festivities, although you had not had time really to know any woman, and chose her only as the most beautiful woman available.

"As to *knowing* that she was a triple-murderess, that *of course* you did not know. Dr Petrus may have believed that he told you that, but in fact Petrus never told you that. There were a number of women being inspected on that occasion, and their sins were specified. But there was some confusion, and the lord Sammael believed that she had blasphemed (which he did not look upon as a very serious sin). He was amazed and horrified when the truth was brought to his notice . . ."

"Pullman," interrupted Sammael; "a fact of great importance. There was a room at Dis in which all *dossiers* as well as the photographs were filed. On this occasion, as always, Petrus and myself were alone together all the time. The clerks in his office no doubt heard from the First Clerk the rumours which they broadcast. They had no first-hand knowledge of what occurred. No doubt Petrus said to his First Clerk, 'The lord Sammael has picked a triple murderess to be his fiancée. What do you think of that?' "

"Oh," Pullman said, with great satisfaction. "That, sir, is a very momentous fact. I should of course put that in next. Then comes the question of what is going to happen to Petrus. I suggest that I say, at this point: 'As to the guilt or otherwise of Petrus, that was left in the hands of the Judge So-and-So. He sifted and resifted the evidence.' "

"And found him guilty?"

"Yes, sir. And found him guilty. The good judge of men can hardly be wrong. In this case all the abominable suffering caused to the lord Sammael was the work of the sensation-loving Petrus. Such would be the bare outline."

Sammael's mind was greatly eased, to judge from his face.

"My dear fellow," he said, "that could not be better, it is splendid. I would be grateful if you would write that out as soon as you are free to do so, I will have it translated immediately. That is very kind. Thank you, Pullman." Sammael looked at his watch. "The First Clerk, by the way, should be dead by this time. The two agents you saw . . ."

Pullman bowed his head, showing that he had registered the demise of the First Clerk.

As more agents were entering, Pullman paused on his way out, and returned for a moment to Sammael. He had remembered something which he thought ought to be said: it took the form of a halting question. "I have been visited, sir, with a rather odd fancy. I wondered—forgive me if this sounds idiotic—I wondered whether the octaroon ought not to have a successor?"

"My dear fellow, she has a successor. A princess." Sammael gazed into Pullman's eyes, rather as f he had scored a point. Pullman smiled broadly, said "Congratulations," and left, passing out between groups of police. Their numbers had increased.

He returned by the outside road. Smoke was still hanging in the sky at the opposite side of the city, though gunfire no longer was heard. In a quarter of an hour he was once more at home. Borp flew out of the kitchen, hoping that he might receive the latest news. But his master merely looked surprised to see him. Borp slowly returned into the kitchen, very disappointed because rumours of the battle had reached him.

Lying down upon the sofa, Pullman attempted to surrender himself to his relaxed body. The results were so satisfactory that in a few minutes he was asleep.

It was seven o'clock when the telephone rang. "Again!" he muttered, as he moved over to the instrument which he snatched off its rocker. There was silence, but almost at once a Third City English voice announced—"the interrogation of Petrus is beginning"—at the offices, of course, of the Secret Service. Okay, he would be there.

There were two Patrol Police, rifles held under their arms, outside the door. Pullman entered the office, in time to hear the familiar voice of the Bailiff reciting, "Gracchus Petrus, you were a good man once, it is a pity that you allowed your mind to be conquered by the sensational. A great pity. But this latest example of it has led to your making so scandalous a mistake as to attribute to the lord Sammael knowledge that was not his. You spread abroad the baseless rumour that he was aware all the time that his fiancée was a triple murderess. Fie, Petrus, it is not possible for you to survive. Gracchus

Petrus, in my judgement, the only manner in which you can atone is death."

And as he said this the Bailiff lifted a long black seal, and stamped it down upon a piece of paper before him. The shorthand writer stopped writing. A large rough man holding a revolver in his right hand approached Petrus.

"Petrus, follow me," he said. Petrus, shivering, followed the man into a further apartment. Once inside the door, he seized him by the hair and stuck the muzzle of the revolver in his throat. He fired twice.

Petrus lay upon the floor. Those present (the offices were quite empty of staff), namely the lord Sammael, the Bailiff, Pullman, and an S.S. clerk, went into the further room. The Bailiff produced a stiletto about a foot long, no thicker than a largish knitting needle. They all knew what it was for, except Pullman. Petrus's jacket was pulled back, and Sammael inserted the point of the stiletto in the neighbourhood of the heart, and drove it home in the apparently dead body. Pullman understood; this ritual reminded him of the insertion of a straw into a cake or pudding to see if it is cooked. In the present case what was used to do the testing with was left in the body.

The lord Sammael walked out of the room. Then he took his hat, and saying, "Well, that is that," he and the others who had followed him now left the S.S. premises, the police outside saluting, and walked away. Sammael and the Bailiff moved towards the former's house and Pullman accompanied them. When they reached the gate, Pullman was obliged to continue in their company; the lord Sammael led them into the small sitting-room, in which, usually, the child lay in the basket; he rang for drinks. A white-coated domestic appeared, and soon returned with cocktails.

"You have settled down wonderfully, Zoë, in your new appointment!"

"Oh, sir, I am as much at home as a duck is on the surface of a lake. I refrained from saying *a swan* . . ."

"You did wrong," smiled Sammael. "I think you are more like a swan than a duck, in that majestic white robe."

The Bailiff had not removed his judicial robe—the old love of finery, Pullman reflected.

"It is my view," he said, "that a man who is so ill-advised

as—to go no further—to do what Petrus did—to go wagging his tongue to his clerks, is a public danger. He could not *serve* in any capacity. A loose-tongued man is best out of the way."

"Is it likely that I would affiance myself to a negress who was a triple murderess?—Is it possible?" Sammael burst out, as though he had been thinking to himself. "Yet that man Petrus has known me for years."

"We must settle, sir, about tonight. Everywhere you go you must be accompanied by at least twenty picked men, of my special Presidential Guard."

"I shall do as you require."

"Thank you, sir. And may I remind you to be armed yourself!"

The little elephant seemed anxious to talk about all aspects of his work; and, as Sammael appeared interested, it looked as if that might take up some time. Pullman saw his opportunity, and begged to be excused. He was warmly thanked for his services by both these monsters, and withdrew in the blackest of moods. When he was once more in his own quarters, Borp rushed out of the kitchen. Pullman waved him furiously away, and he slunk back quickly into the kitchen.

"That damned fellow will never let me alone. Entirely my own fault, however. I act a part for him, he naturally expects me to go on with my clowning. Still."

Pullman crossed the room, and flung himself into the largest, easiest chair, dead-beat. He stared at the floor. "What brutes all these people are," he said to himself. "Cesare Borgia knew that they were human beings he was killing. No. It is nonsense to compare Sammael with Cesare Borgia. He and the little elephant derive no pleasure whatever from killing Petrus. It would be untrue to say that these people are cruel. They are not cruel. It is only cruel if you realize that the people you are injuring or destroying have feelings. There is no sense at all of the other person *feeling:* these people are devoid of that sensation. They do not recognize feelings in others. They accept no equality with Petrus, any more than would a Roman Emperor regard an Asiatic captive slave as human."

Pullman petulantly dismissed these observations as futile. All that is so of course, but it isn't worth saying. God *values* man: that is the important thing to remember. It is this valuing that is so extraordinary. There are men who only value *power.*

This is absurd, because power destroys value. Value can only exist with multiplicity. The only value for Sammael is solipsistic. I, Pullman, am acting in a valueless vacuum called Sammael. He looked at his apartment. It was a momentary resting place in a vacuum.

With a perfunctory knock, Dr Schlank entered. "The sky is full of fireworks," he said. "Pullman, did you not hear the reports?" Pullman had dimly heard the reports, but had not connected them with the festivities—with the Fiesta in a vacuum. He went to the other side of the house, the kitchen window being the best vantage point from which to observe the fireworks. Stars were bursting with a hideous smacking report. There were baskets of flowers exploding softly, not much higher up than the trees. There was a large flaming wheel. Pullman could hear the chanting of the angels from a number of directions at once. There were many other sounds as well, and minor fireworks, sparkling and crackling all over Angeltown.

He returned to the living-room, and said to Schlank, "Do you think you live in a vacuum?"

"No," Schlank answered. "There is no such thing as a vacuum."

"Ah yes, nature abhors," said Pullman. "But this is not nature."

"No?" replied Schlank. "Have you had supper? If not, have a bite, and come for a walk with me?"

Pullman did not wish to be alone; and if he stopped here another five minutes the telephone would ring again, and he would be summoned to come and look at the princess. So he made a sandwich standing at the refrigerator, and in a quarter of an hour he went out with Schlank.

Two hours later the two friends were sitting near a basin full of reckless fountains, but their splashing was only an inconvenience if you were sitting on the farther side. The splashing was mingled with the strains of an orchestra. Schlank liked the disorderly leaping of the water, and Pullman humoured him. There were perhaps a dozen terraces of tables and chairs, and thousands of people were seated there drinking coffee, or wine or brandy, while thousands more promenaded. The two friends had had several glasses of wine.

The orchestra oozed out Chaminade and Rubinstein.

"What selections!" said Schlank.

"They have orders to provide the kind of swoony slush appropriate when sexual emotions are uppermost."

"Ah yes—I had forgotten."

Three angels passed, intoxicated, but the middle one most so; he was contained, so to speak, by the two on either side of him who, with shamefaced smiles, rolled inwards. He in the centre had an exquisite, open-eyed, heavenly blossoming mouth.

Two women, stepping mincingly, avoided the trio. An elderly man, following the two women, coughed censoriously, for the benefit of the mincing blondes. But a single angel came just behind him and coughed very coarsely. Then came three angels again, but sober, self-conscious, like polar bears dressed up.

Pullman quoted Baudelaire—"'Ses ailes de géant l'empêchent de marcher.' These rustics of Heaven, how divinely clumsy they are. They cannot forget the wings that are not there upon their backs."

Schlank grunted.

"Why do they go about in threes?" Pullman wondered.

"That," declared Schlank, "is in order to avoid two. A bad number."

"I do not think it is anything to do with numbers, two is the number of the civilised; three is the barbarians' choice. Or it may be for safety too. Are there any gangs here?"

"Gangs?" reflected Schlank. "The angel is very brutal. It is their thousands of years of militarism."

"Yes. Is the lord Sammael respected by all of them, treated as a military chief?"

"It is my belief," Schlank answered, "that he is practically worshipped. On their flights they all follow him automatically. Like birds you know."

"Speak of the Devil," muttered Pullman in his own language.

He saw Sammael approaching, a stately, dark young woman walking at his side, her hand within his arm. He was being very "gay cavalierish", waving his right hand, laughing with the utmost grace, bending down devotedly—an elegant comedy, in short.

Dr Schlank, crying "Here is the lord Sammael," sprang to his feet.

Pullman, as if just apprised of the presence of his great patron, sprang up too. Both raised their hats, Pullman sweeping his off in the most courtly way, and both held their hats in their hands.

"The Princess Cecilia Romanoff, my fiancée," announced the lord Sammael.

Both Schlank and Pullman bowed low, their hats clutched against their stomachs, Schlank's eye never leaving the Princess's face.

French was the language of the Princess. She had so modest and beautiful a face that Pullman felt sure she had had her bottom well booted by the police on the road to Dis.

Dr Schlank was flattered to learn that the Princess was familiar with his "Theorie". He flushed and bowed with great violence.

"We are going to watch the dancing, where a floor has been laid down at the Markets," Sammael told them. "Will you two gentlemen accompany us?"

Schlank bowed with almost hysterical violence, expressing at the same time his pleasure at the privilege of being in the company of the Princess.

They went there in Sammael's Cadillac. As soon as they had taken their place upon a dais, where there were only a few chairs and tables reserved for especially honoured guests, the band stopped, and began playing the ceremonial hymn in honour of the lord Sammael. Everyone present stood up, at the end of it everyone roared out some formula of acclaim; at which Sammael sprang up and kissed his hands with fervent grace.

Pullman was sitting beside the Princess, and as he looked at her he hoped that her fiancé would not kill *her* as soon as her presence proved an embarrassment. Her large dark eyes seemed to look out at the world with an expression which was, at once, frightened and curious—as if she feared it terribly, but was not indifferent to it. They spoke of Paris, with which Pullman was very familiar, but not the parts of the city best known to her. However, she knew the Ilse Saint Louis, and that was where Pullman had lived. She then asked if Monsieur Schlank's "Theorie" superseded Einstein's "Theorie".

"Ah, you must ask Dr Schlank about that."

"Oh, 'Doctor'. Is he a Doctor? No, I would not dare to ask him," she replied, with a visible increase of nervousness. "He bowed so fiercely. Is he a very terrifying man, or is it only the forbidding character of German etiquette, only that? They seem to wish to knock you over with their chests."

"It is nothing but his fierce bowing, I see, it is only that. He is only alarming when he plunges into mathematics."

Sammael, who had been listening to what they had been saying, turned to Schlank and said, "The Princess thinks you are a very frightening man . . ."

"I? I?" cried Schlank, terribly delighted.

The frightened look in the eyes of the Princess was deepening and she glanced towards Schlank.

"To lessen the Princess's terror of me," he said, "please tell Her Royal Highness that . . . tell her how respectful but abject an admirer I am of her great beauty."

Sammael translated this speech and after a colloquy with his fiancée he turned to Schlank, and said, "The Princess replied that what I told her only increased her misgivings."

Dr Schlank frowned.

He said, "The word *respectful* in my message guarantees that my admiration is padlocked in my heart, mounted guard over by an iron discipline."

After another exchange between his fiancée and himself, Sammael informed the Doctor that the Princess had observed that men were never so dangerous as when they were *respectful.*

"I give up," said Schlank, with a gesture of surrender, "as, out of my own mouth, I have proved myself a wolf, if it would remove any uneasiness in the mind of the Princess, I would leave."

A short conversation occurred between Sammael and his fiancée. Pullman, to his astonishment, heard the Princess persist, that *yes,* it would be far better if Dr Schlank left at once. "If he does not, I shall." And she rose in her chair, and had to be persuaded to reseat herself. Sammael, as astonished as Pullman, reasoned with her. But with increasing firmness, not to say hysterical obstinacy, she insisted that his presence was very disagreeable to her.

Pullman said to Sammael, "As a matter of fact, Schlank and

I have a date, and in a few minutes we should be obliged to leave you."

He rose and said to Schlank, "Well, we are late already, so I have told the lord Sammael that we are going."

Dr Schlank rose silently, his eyes fixed upon the Princess. He bowed from the waist, and they left. They had not taken many steps when there was a scream behind them. They stopped and turned back, but the lord Sammael waved them away.

When they were out of earshot, Pullman said to his friend, who was extremely disturbed: "I am afraid that this time the lord Sammael has picked a lunatic, or at least a case of advanced hysteria."

"You think so?" Schlank seemed relieved.

"Yes. I thought she was very slightly odd from the first."

"What will the lord Sammael do?" asked Schlank.

"Shoot her, I expect, like the other one."

Schlank looked at him inquiringly. "Has that occurred already?"

They were some distance now from Sammael and his Romanoff. They turned round and saw him leading her to his car.

Pullman and his dejected friend strolled back towards the fountains, and, as Schlank suggested, reoccupied the table so recently vacated. There they remained until just after midnight. The official hour for the commencement of the Kermess was twelve-thirty. They had decided to return home at about this time, as an angel Kermess might not be very peaceable, Schlank counselled.

The orchestra was packing up, a charabanc waited to transport the instrumentalists away to their quarters. The strollers and sitters were dispersing. Many had cars, especially the non-angelic and the female section.

They were soon in Angelsway, where, slightly dismayed, they found the Kermess was already in progress. Choral groups went drifting past, chanting something like plain-song, or early modal music from, say, the Hebrides. "One would say a perversion of the Christchild's Lullaby," Pullman commented.

As he heard the term "Christchild" the "Schlafendes Jesuskind" appeared to come into Schlank's mind. He softly sang a few bars, and then stopped.

Everyone was a little drunk. All these huge figures lurched along, and here and there was a woman among two or three giants, looking particularly small and precarious.

Then they passed a cross-street, and a short distance up something was occurring. A group of six angels was there, and one was, quite visibly, in the act of possessing a little female figure.

"The Kermess has begun in earnest," muttered Pullman.

"Your doubt about the sexual rustiness of the angels is dissipated, however," was Schlank's comment.

"You know your angel better than I do."

They came upon a crowd of people around a house. There was a loud battering upon the door, and there was a chorus of disagreeable menacing shouts.

"Quite likely," said Schlank, "they will take this opportunity of lynching unpopular angels."

Two or three of the angels began to break in a door.

"They gang up, do they?" Pullman asked.

"They are the most inveterate gangers-up. It accounts for many things here."

"For timidity, for instance?"

Schlank nodded.

They were approaching a wildly moving circle of dancers which almost stretched from side to side of the street. Two extremely long pipes produced considerable noise, of a piercing, howling complaint.

They got successfully past this whirling circle, only to be met by a second, even more wildly tumbling one. To pass it they were now obliged to traverse the lawn of one of the houses.

"I hope we meet no more living wheels," said Pullman.

"I too," Schlank agreed. "The force of their wheels is terrific."

But they walked for some time with nothing more dynamic than chains of drunks which stretched across the sidewalk, and forced them to take to the road. The nearest drunks in these chains made faces at them, and shouted what were probably insults. Pullman said, "I feel a midget," and Schlank said, "I feel like a mouse in the midst of very large rats."

But they were now not very far from home. Then, in the centre of a crowd of people rapidly approaching them, there

were angry voices, abnormally loud and fierce. Once more they had to trespass upon the beautifully cut lawn, as they met this swarm, and then the swarm stopped and as it were opened, a hollow appearing in the middle. An extremely large angel was attacking a smaller one. He had his hands up, in the scratching position, as had his adversary.

They sprang at one another, scratching faces. This did not continue long. The smaller one's countenance was ploughed up, in some places his skin torn away. One eye appeared about to drop out. Suddenly he was seized by the larger one, dragged towards the ground, and the big angel bent over him and was busy with his hands. Both his eyes were gouged out, as Pullman and his friend saw quite well, for they saw the eyes flying through the air. The crowd saw it too: they raised a deep and prolonged "Oh" sound in violent protest. The gouger stood up, and looking around furiously, as he crouched in the centre of this bellowing crowd, he took hold of the nearest angel—again, one considerably smaller than himself, and dragged him towards the ground, to repeat his gouging upon this second victim. But with a deep howl, from two sides, the pack hurled themselves on him. There was a brief struggle: they all got to their feet again, except the particularly large angel. He lay, toes upwards, the handle of a long knife sticking up expressively, above the region of the heart; a nail had been hammered into each of his eyes.

Pullman and Schlank hurried away from the corpse, as did everybody else.

"A very good example of the action of the gang." Schlank spoke a little breathlessly. "You can't do that, I mean what that big chap did. In every collection of people, there is one or more gangs. The gang will revenge itself upon whoever injures a member: I knew what would happen the moment I saw the eyes spurt out. He was drunk, or he would not have done that."

"It might be called a democracy by gangs," Pullman observed.

They both continued to walk fast. As they left Angelsway they looked back. The vast street was empty, except for a vulture circling around where the corpse was. He may have been suspicious of the shining handle of the dagger, sculptured to represent a serpent rampant.

## XVI

THE FOLLOWING MORNING, before breakfast, the telephone rang. It was of course Sammael. Could Pullman come and see him at once. It was always *at once*. He would give him breakfast.

When Pullman reached the lord Sammael's, as he was entering the special office the tray with his breakfast arrived at the same time, an honest English face above it (which had acquired, however, a slight look of dishonesty because of the whiskers); and an honest British voice wished him a decent good-morning. A few minutes later, as he was pouring out his first cup of coffee, Sammael strode in, looking exceedingly grave, an expression which did not suit him.

"I will begin at once," he said as he sat down. "My second fiancée is insane, as no doubt you guessed. When she was brought here yesterday evening I thought she was very eccentric, but attributed that to the strange circumstances, and perhaps to inherited fear, natural in a member of the Romanoff family. She greeted me: 'Vous êtes le Diable? Bon. Je hais Dieu.' That was nothing. But in a hundred ways she astonished me. Her antipathy for poor Dr Schlank was the climax. I returned her to her hotel, contacted your friend Zoë... you still think of him, of course, as the Bailiff, don't you? I set him to work. He is a miracle worker. Within one hour he had unearthed this. She was the inmate of a state Asylum near Paris. Her name is Ernestine Schumann. It was her belief that she was a Romanoff, she could not be cured of this unfortunate obsession. An attempt on her part to shoot the Russian Ambassador, in Paris, led to the discovery of her dementia, and, of course, her detention. She was quite unfit for ordinary imprisonment, and was lodged in the State Criminal Alienation Centre."

"How did she get here, under the name and title of Princess Cecilia Romanoff?" Pullman drank his coffee, awaiting the answer.—He knew that the next question was the critical one.

"Such accidents do occasionally occur. But as a rule the mistake is immediately apparent. What is shocking is how she came to be passed on to me as an authentic princess."

"Ah yes, that requires some sifting."

"No, Pullman. That already has been done by the Secret Service. The elimination of Petrus was so abrupt, as also of the First Clerk, that the department was thrown into confusion. Actually, Petrus himself ought to have noticed how eccentric she was—he, ultimately, was to blame.—She is now in the hands of an expert in female alienation, a private doctor who has a samll clinic out in the country.... So far so good. But what on earth is to be done about the publicity regarding this I do not know. I am at my wits' end, frankly."

He looked appealingly to Pullman.

The rôle that Pullman had assumed demanded a godlike promptitude in producing an answer. There must be no shadow of a pause suggestive of the rational process—of the brain grinding round and working out its answer. There must be nothing like that; there must be, as it were, a flash, and a fully grown answer is born.

At first sight the present difficulty bore so close a resemblance to the last, that it could only be treated in the same way. The same questions had to be asked, and when it had been confirmed that there was no unexpected element, the solution must be a repetition of the means employed to dispose of the octaroon. Pullman did his best to disguise the fact that he was saying, "Same Prescription as before." But the monotony depressed him, and he hoped it would not depress his patron. Anyhow, attempting to give the impression that he was a man competent, with the same cool brain, to handle any conceivable situation, he put a few questions.

"Is it possible to suppress completely," asked Pullman, "the fact that she was an impostor as well as mad?"

"Let us turn to your old friend." Sammael took up the telephone, and asked for a number. He was just beginning to say something, when the telephone rang. It was the Bailiff, who was already at his office. After talking for four or five minutes, Sammael replaced the receiver. "It seems to him," he said, "that the public would not be interested..."

"Which is not the point," said Pullman.

"He thinks he should be able to stop that up. But there is the danger of a leakage from Dis. Short of wholesale executions, he thinks nothing can be guaranteed regarding that."

"All right. Why couldn't he say," said Pullman, smiling, "that to stop it was impossible... Well, that disposes of the

possibility of reporting your prostration, your deep grief, at the sudden collapse of the Princess Cecilia Romanoff. If they know that she is not the Princess, that cannot be done. You couldn't feel that way about a criminal lunatic."

"Evidently," said Sammael.

"Well, let us think of the next best line."

Pullman paused for one minute, then he said, "The *best* thing would be for the beautiful girl to die at the alienist's. Then you could be grief-stricken. There are a thousand ways of being beautiful. Ernestine possesses one of those ways. You could truthfully say that you had never met a more beautiful girl. Emphasise it a fraction, 'she was the *most* beautiful.' All your sorrow is due to *beauty*—Romanoff descent fades into the background. You are simply a wolf. The most beautiful girl in the world is apparently yours to devour; she is snatched away."

Sammael stood up.

"Shall we walk around to the Secret Service Office?"

Pullman rose, Sammael picked up the telephone. In a few minutes they started off. On the way Pullman offered a suggestion.

"Perhaps the best way would be for her to be transported in a secret service car . . . to consult another alienist at the General Hospital. *En route* she dies."

"I will propose that to Zoë." Pullman noted that the ex-Bailiff was already an affectionate diminutive, and later he noticed that Sammael was "Sam".

The little elephant was in his office. He was there separated from the remainder of the office by a waitingroom. This was empty, and the door that led into it was locked on the inside by the Bailiff.

"We are henceforth alone," he said.

Pullman and Sammael sat opposite the little Czar of the Secret Service. It did not take Sammael very long to explain the situation. They spoke in the language native to both of them, and it was not until they had quite finished that Zoë turned to Pullman and said, "That will be quite simple. She will die of a cerebral haemorrhage. That is the quickest and surest, and is most in keeping with her cerebral condition. Congratulations, my dear Pullman, on your plan—it is masterly."

Pullman bowed, as if he had received a decoration. Now he was accepted as a master by these ruthless desperadoes.

It was agreed that the car transporting the girl should pick up a physician employed by the Secret Service. They would take the longest way back down to the town. By the time they reached the hospital she would be dead (for when she ceased to breathe they would not take her back to the alienist). The corpse would remain at the hospital, and be incinerated in the usual way. The lord Sammael himself would inform the alienist of the death of his patient.

"Well," said Pullman, "that is all nicely arranged."

"I think it is," echoed the chief of the Secret Service and Security Police.

Pullman and Sammael walked back to the latter's house. Unless he could be of any service, Pullman said, he would return at once to the Haus Europa, and think over what publicity would be desirable.

Ernestine was dispatched according to the Pullman Plan, and was duly cremated. The "Romanoff affair" ended with a small literary work composed by Pullman (printed anonymously), named "Woman-Hater Loses His True Love".

The next affair for which Pullman was called in was a message from the Deity. It warned the lord Sammael not to proceed with his plans to close down Hades. Secondly, it reproached him, with the utmost severity, for the humanisation of the angel population. "This is, up to date, your greatest sin."

Pullman took very little part in answering this. He advised conciliation, whereas Sammael was truculent, and sent a defiant reply.

The rat-tat of machine-gun bullets suddenly competing with the jittercrackery imagined by Pullman had raised questions in his mind to which he had never sought an answer. Just before they parted company, one day, Pullman surprised his patron by the following remarks: "That was a queer episode, that so-called 'revolt', sir. We have never had time to discuss it, otherwise I should have asked you, sir, to explain what lay behind it, and, more important, what it portended."

"I don't quite understand what you want to know, Pullman." Sammael looked genuinely puzzled.

"When first we came upon this unusual disturbance, a large

placard, stood on end by the side of the road, attracted our attention. On it were the words, 'Down with the Jittercracking Iconoclast.' I have thought about this quite a little," Pullman said, emphatically. "I wondered what this meant, sir? Was it a reflection of disputes in the body of the committee ruling the city? I do not wish to be inquisitive; but if there is no objection to my . . ."

"Of course not, Pullman. You were correct in your supposition. There has been a storm brewing for some time in the debates carried on in that committee. The usual word employed by those in opposition is 'Iconoclast'. I am of course precisely that—which makes it rather difficult to repudiate. As image-breaker I have, to my account—and exceedingly to my credit—a towering pile of fragments representing the destruction of what I regard as false idols. Furthermore, most certainly I have jittercracked them. What the devil was I expected to do?"

Sammael lay back in his chair, shaking with laughter.

He found the expression "what the devil" irresistibly funny.

Pullman shared with him these spasms of jittercracking amusement. But he then returned to the subject which Sammael was covering up with explosions of mirth.

"If your Excellency would not mind informing me of the exact position—what is your standing in this committee? Are you the unquestionable master, or is there a mojority against your revolutionary proposals? I hear that a couple of hundred dissidents were shot after the so-called battle. Did that comprise most of your bitterest opponents?"

The lord Sammael stretched, and yawned. He was gaining time to consider what his reply should be.

"No-n-no—no, Pullman, I wish they *had* all been shot. There are too many of them. But they are not able to do much harm. We can leave that question for the time being."

"Thank you, sir. I see exactly. Heavenly plots, I imagine. Great naughtiness on the part of the Allhighest."

"Beautifully phrased!" Sammael shook appreciatively.

"Next, sir, let us take up the question of pursuing, with frenzy, the good results issuing from the Fiesta. It is my suggestion that the initiative regarding Woman should be developed without any delay. For instance, a form should be

prepared, very carefully, be printed, and despatched to every citizen in Angeltown. Its purpose would be to ascertain the number of angels desiring wives. They would be asked to fill in the form, and return it to the ofice handling this matter. Over a hundred already have wives, and as many as eight thousand have sent in their names as desirous of acquiring a mate."

Sammael nodded approvingly. Pullman then proceeded to inform his patron of the following facts. These applicants for wives displayed great zeal. Even, up in the top corner of many of their appeals, a rough drawing of the male sexual organ appeared. This was understood as a token of urgency. It was learned that, of those already possessed of wives, in many cases the latter were loaned out to friends. One man was murdered who had refused to give up the woman lent him by his neighbour.

Sammael showed as much enthusiasm as ever for the initiative of Pullman, and asked him to give his personal attention to all matters connected with what he called "a jittercracking Post-Fiesta". This was what Pullman wanted, and he undertook immediately a series of tasks all belonging to the furtherance of this great scheme. A kind of matrimonial agency was set up not far from the Haus Europa. The inhabitants of Angelsway became used to seeing buses full of smiling women passing their doors. Increasing crowds of angels gathered at the matrimonial agency; the staff had to be considerably augmented. A half-dozen armed police were posted there as well, as fights were not infrequent.

The Slave Market, as Pullman called it, was a source of amusement to those dwelling in the Haus Europa. At length the Haus itself contributed to the matrimonial desire.

The Rumanian mathematician put his name down, and a few days later he returned with a buxom Saxon wench. After Dr Schlank had seen her, he said to Pullman, "This house will soon be full of Germans. Then we shall have to change its name. It will then be Haus Germania."

While this was going forward so satisfactorily, the lord Sammael began reducing the staff of the Punishment Centre. In doing this very gradually, it was possible to find other jobs for them. Meanwhile their salary was continued.

A hospital for angels was projected, the site chosen, and the building soon would start. The medical staff at Dis would

find employment (of a less dramatic order, it is true) in this institution, or elsewhere.

Then, although this was not publicised yet, industries were planned where some angels, if they wished, could find employment. The structure of the future society was now being worked out by a committee appointed by the ruling body of Angeltown. Every day also consultations took place between Sammael and Pullman. A small library was assembled for the use of members of the committee. Reference books at this juncture seemed appropriate. Pullman suggested that a specially trained body of angels should form a kind of permanent governing class—into which could be brought, as time went on, the most brilliant of the offspring of angels. A definitely aristocratic structure was without difficulty agreed upon.

But all these goings on were apparently reported in Heaven, for really furious communications began to reach Sammael from on High. These were answered with mounting truculence. And then, they were no longer answered at all.

## XVII

THEN ONE DAY A LETTER was thrust beneath Pullman's door. He was out at the time, but when he returned home Borp handed it to him; he said that a "White Angel" had left it, he had seen one going down the stairs immediately after the letter had been delivered. "White Angel" was what the messengers from Heaven were generally called, because of the white garment that they wore, and the whiteness, or pallor, of their faces. And so when Pullman heard this he went very white himself, and, sitting down, perspiration began to form on his forehead.

The letter itself, which he opened with trembling hands, was on a sheet of plain white paper, just as were those he had been shown by Sammael, reaching him by heavenly messenger. It was headed:

To JAMES PULLMAN.

The report of your activities has reached us in Heaven. We know everything, there is no more to know. Prepare for the punishment you have called down upon yourself, follower of the Evil One.

Pullman's response to that message was to bury his face in his hands, weeping bitterly. For a short time he did nothing but weep, and lightly bang his head against the chair. Then he began to pray.

He addressed his prayers to God directly. "Oh God of unlimited mercy and of marvellous kindness; as you understand, forgive: forgive all the hideous misdemeanours of your very wicked servant, sinning quite knowingly, but unable to resist the attraction of Evil, from his first contact with the so-called Bailiff, association with whom led him directly into the dreadful shadow of Satan. Lord God forgive! Would you trouble to crush the worm that crawls at the foot your old Enemy?"

Pullman bowed his head, the tears running down his cheeks.

He followed his formal prayer by a silent one of the utmost abasement. He then, watched by Borp with amazement, rose unsteadily to his feet, picked up the letter, and thrust it into his pocket. Then he rushed across the room, encountering Borp with a cry, passed him and entered his bedroom. He returned to the door, and called to his servant, "Let no one in. Say to anyone that I am out." Then he laid himself down on the bed, covered himself up, and attempted to control his shivering body. There was nothing to do now but to prepare for his just punishment. He could do nothing all that day. To do nothing was the best preliminary to extinction. The telephone was not answered, and at last it ceased to ring. Sammael, that cursed monster of smoothness and deceit, he would not speak to unless he must. He colud not escape him for long, he knew; there was no *physical* escape.

The hours passed on, abjectly awaiting a further "White Angel", bearer of another heavenly message. He would confront the terrible white-faced emissary and interrogate him. At every step on the landing outside he shook and sweated. But the dreaded messenger did not reappear.

Schlank thrust his head into the room. "Wie gehts?"

"Schlecht," answered Pullman. "Feeling really very rotten . . . got a belly-ache. When I feel myself again I will come in."

Schlank stood and looked hard at him for a minute or two more. Then he gave his head a toss and quickly shut the door.

Eventually Pullman became more alarmed by the non-appearance of this celestial messenger than he would have been by a larger, whiter, more physically threatening intruder.

The next day the telephone bell began to ring early. Borp's orders were not to touch the instrument. At length, at about eleven o'clock, Pullman walked quickly over to it, wrenched the receiver out of the place where it was cradled, and said harshly, "Yes, what is it?"

The voice of Sammael immediately answered him. "It is Sammael."

Pullman was electrified by this name, handed him softly, with all kinds of meanings in it. He took hold of himself, stiffened out of a relaxed position.

"Ah, sir, so it was you ringing me? I am afraid I have not been very well."

"I am sorry to hear that. What has been the matter?"

Pullman made a very great effort to rearrange his mind in order to have this interview.

"This is difficult."

"Oh."

"You are involved, sir. You know what is meant by the expression 'White Angel'?"

Sammael's voice at once became mocking. "Yes, Pullman, I know what that means, I know perfectly what has been the nature of your illness." A burst of unexpected mirth came rattling out of the telephone. "Pullman! You are funny, very funny, do you know. A message reached you from on High—and you are frightened! You desert your old friend who loves you. You do not answer the telephone. Oh, oh, what a strange character. I thought you were as brave as a lion, but you are just a little man after all! Pullman—Pullman—Pullman!"

But the "little man" was indignant. "I wish, sir, that you were able to place yourself, in imagination, in my shoes. The lion is physically a large and redoubtable animal; it is easy for the lion to be brave; who would not be brave if he were a lion!"

A roar, resembling that of a lion, but coloured with laughter, came back over the telephone.

"Yes, sir, allow me to say that you have roared your laughter in the face of God for at least five or six thousand years."

Sammael's voice dropped into a quiet key. "But we should not be bickering, Pullman—that is absurd. To have the eye of Heaven fixed on you is understandably terrifying. By the way, Zoë's motor-police have picked up, a couple of hours ago, a 'White Angel'—on his way to you; we have him locked up. He is heavily chained—do you remember, Pullman, how you advised that precaution? Well, there you are. I cannot, with words, lift the terror from your heart... but there is absolutely nothing whatever to be terrified about. I would tell you if there were—and would tell you what steps to take to avoind any evil consequences. But if I send an armed guard down to the Haus Europa, will you, under that protection, come and visit me? Or are you afraid to take that risk. God may be peeping out of the sky, of course."

"I may as well take my life in my hands, sir—if this can be called life."

"Tut tut, Pullman, do not sneer at it; it is, after all, not so bad, the Haus Europa. I have contrived a life for you, in the midst of death... almost within sight of Hell. Come, come, you must not be so fastidious!"

Pullman had heard a sound in Sammael's voice which brought the sweat to his forehead again. "I understand you, sir. I will come at once."

There was a soft laugh, just reaching him in the telephone. "Good. I await you."

After those covert threats Pullman would never feel so comfortable with Satan again. Satan's threats were more immediate than God's. All he could hope for was a little respite, moving gingerly, with constant alarms, between the "White Angel" and the lord of Hell.

## XVIII

PULLMAN FOUND HIS CHAUFFEUR leaning against the automobile. He sprang to attention; Pullman signed him that he was going to drive himself. He took the quietest and quickest road. As he reached the end of the first block, he only averted a collision with a truck, moving at a great speed, with a presence of mind that he could hardly credit himself with, in reviewing what had happened afterwards. He must for the moment have been someone else. He looked into the face of the chauffeur, and found the blood had left it, and the eyes were almost starting from the head.

"Congratulate me on my driving," he said.

"How did you do it, sir? That I am alive is a miracle!"

Had that truck been trying to murder him? When they reached the lord Sammael's house, Pullman dismissed the chauffeur for the day: "You look ill. Go home at once, at once." He walked firmly up the usual path to the usual door.

Sammael was in his very private study. Pullman was introduced into the room; then found himself almost pressed up against Sammael, whose smiling face was a few inches away from his.

"It has taken a long time, Pullman, to unearth you. I wondered. at one time, whether we should ever meet again."

"I wondered too—I have been scared half out of my life."

"I know, Pullman! I realized everything that was happening. But I did not reach you any quicker for that reason. It was very long-winded for your poor friend; hour after hour I was telephoning you! I knew you were there, and would not answer me. I knew *why* you would not answer me. But what could I do? ... But let us wrap this up and forget it. It was due to a quite natural incapacity on your part to withstand the terror produced when you received a visit from a White Angel ... It would be a waste of time to discuss that, or, better, I will refer to it a little later. Let us go now back to where we were before the arrival of the white messenger."

"Very well, sir."

From the standpoint of his master, Pullman looked extremely unpromising. He had sat down in the chair in which he usually placed himself, and at once was invaded by the

darkest possible thoughts, representing to him vividly the step he was taking in again entering this house, and again proceeding to go into consultation with this greatest of enemy spirits, this embodiment of Evil, this traditional Enemy of God. The hours during which he had sat trembling, in expectation of the arrival of another white messenger from Heaven, made a solid background of demoralisation, a condition from which he had not recovered, pressing in upon him from just behind. He understood what he was asked to do; namely, to resume his talks at the point at which he had left off. But he found himself unable to break up or disperse the encasement of hysterical sensations which hemmed him in, and refused to allow his mind to function properly. Therefore, he looked, as he felt, extremely ill. Sammael thought that he would wait a certain time, in the hope that he would recover. If he did not recover, he would give it up, and go to one of the many points in Angeltown where his presence was awaited. He rang a bell. An attendant appeared, and he asked him to bring two martinis as quickly as possible.

"Let us have a cocktail, Pullman, and see if we can cheer up. Meanwhile, you know, of course, that I receive messages from the same great source as yourself. They do not alarm me so much as they do you. But of course I realize that this mounting fury on High, with all those steps I am taking continually to remould this city, that the *last step* will not be a threatening letter. I am aware that a more concrete manifestation must be expected."

"I believe, sir, that I foretold some such course of events."

"Yes, Pullman, but you foretold some *successful* concrete reprisal. There is a great difference between what I am saying, what I am predicting, and what you predicted."

Pullman was silent. The prediction, such as it was, of Sammael had added fuel to his sensational burden of imagination. Up till then he had thought of nothing concrete which was larger, or more horrifying, than a White Angel. Now something impalpably vaster than that presented itself to his fancy. But he made a grandiose effort.

"If the lord Sammael," Pullman said, "would be so kind as to tell me if anything new has occurred, concerning the transformation of Angeltown into a new type of community?"

Sammael's face was very powerfully tensed.

"Pullman, we are making wonderful headway. Your friend Zoë tells me that the number of angels living in Angeltown with women, as man and wife, is approximately twenty thousand."

"That is surprisingly good, I think," Pullman asserted. An attendant entered, and Pullman received from him a brimming cocktail glass. He drank half of it at once; he replaced it upon the corner of the desk. The figures of the little elephant communicated to him by Sammael were very satisfying, but they had imprinted themselves upon Pullman's mind with an impact as unemotional as if Sammael had said "My cook has bought twenty cats, as there is an infestation of mice," or Twenty blackbirds are to be baked in a pie... in the somewhere... at some time."

His dark mood took command. He did not mind if twenty thousand bloody angels took to themselves twenty thousand bloody wives, or did any other bloody thing, that was certainly that. He picked up the cocktail glass and emptied it. It might have been water, for all the kick it had. Sammael seemed to understand perfectly. He rose, went over to Pullman smiling, put his hand on his shoulder, and said, "Pullman, you are out of sorts. Go home, my dear fellow. You will find you will be better in a week or two. Let us come together then."

Pullman's idiotic condition was invaded by a warm sensation of affectionate thankfulness. He pressed Sammael's hand, and held it.

"I am unable to express my great gratitude, sir. You are magnificent. If the White Angels pay me visits, I shall tell them that."

"Do, do, Pullman, say just that. It would have a most salutary effect."

Sammael burst into a laugh, swelling with goodnatured mockery.

Pullman stepped out of the house with even more firmness than he had stepped into it. He nodded broodingly to the police guard, and walked down to his car. As he drove rather recklessly down a side-street, passing numbers of angels, his new manner of thought persisted. Glancing at these large, long, open-mouthed faces he thought, "Immortal morons—*heilige Toren*—undergraduate minds—rusticated for ever be-

cause of their 'counter-idolatry'." And he pursued his scurrilous imagery. Before he reached home he saw that he could not go on like that if he was to live satisfactorily with these people. However much he feared God, he must practise fearing them also. Let him thank his stars that the Devil smiled on him. Do not let him unlearn his terror and horror of the first days in the proximity of Hell.

The weeks passed in, first of all, a continuous emotional see-saw, succeeded by a return to what he termed normality. At length he exhausted himself with his fear; and he began to believe that the White Angel was either an accident, or else only one of the thousands of warnings which were discharged indiscriminately from Heaven every day. He never saw anything remotely resembling a White Angel. He did not know that the Bailiff had motor-car mounted police circling the Haus Europa, morning and night. This was not a result of instructions from Sammael; but Sammael had spoken to him about the threatened decay of the spirit of Pullman, and the little elephant thought of the latter as an ally and valuable friend He did not at all want to see Pullman disappear. For his own purposes he placed the guard around his house—to make quite sure that no White Angels reached it: he had a half-dozen in his pen, all of them with pressure-letters directed to Pullman.

Finally, however, the heavenly messengers found a very simple way of outwitting the police who circled the Haus Europa. One of them landed, after a direct flight, upon the roof. Returning to the Haus Europa after several hours spent at the Sports Centre, Pullman opened the door of his flat and discovered a tall white figure engaged in fixing something upon his wall. It was one of the dreaded angels. As he entered the room the heavenly messenger stepped back from the wall, and began gliding towards the windows. The creature did not move very quickly; indeed it was with a strange somnambulic lassitude that this White Angel propelled himself towards a likely exit. Pullman's energy was as great as the angel's was small; so small, indeed, as to appear to suffer from a debility which invaded all his muscles and caused him to drag himself along. Now the more galvanic of these two rushed to the window, reaching it before the intruder, locking it and removing the key. Charged as he was with will, Pullman shrank

from the pallid, inhuman being, whose face glared emptily and was as incapable of fear as of anything else.

That creature of a mysterious flesh showed no signs of alarm. This was not a frightened bird, attempting to escape from a room into which it had blundered, but the bearer of a terrible message, who did not wish for any contact with this evil man.

This in no way nonplussed visitor, beginning to glide as heavily as before, turned doorwards. Pullman with a typical aptitude for action shot ahead of the bemused agent of Heaven. He stood squarely back to the door.

"Pullman, I am your prisoner?" demanded the White Angel, in a startling voice, perfectly corresponding with the personality out of which it came. It asked awkwardly what the tall white mechanical creature wanted to know, without any emotion. But the elongated colourless mask, with the glaring eyes, expressed as much emotion as the voice sounded totally drained of it.

"I hope I do not embarrass you," replied Pullman. "As you entered my flat during my absence, naturally I would like to exchange a few words with you. Who are you?"

"You know where I come from, Pullman," was the angel's answer.

Pullman shuddered, and gazed back into the terrible face, as if he were facing an executioner. "Who then do these messages come from?" he demanded. "Not from God Himself?"

"He for whom I act interprets the mighty thoughts of Another, about whom you speak."

The angel pointed to the message he had pinned to the wall. It read:

"On earth, gifted with cleverness, you were full of wickedness. You died, Pullman, as you had lived, without seeking the mediation of a priest. You believe that you can reproduce upon the plane of eternal life your life on Earth. But you will meet with your fate before the sun sets—prepare to be expelled from the so-called Haus Europa, and to find yourself in eternal damnation."

Pullman flung himself down on the floor, tears bursting from his eyes, his hands clasped in an attitude of supplication.

It was, of course, Pullman's intention that the angel, when

he got back to Heaven, would report how very distressed was the sinner that he had visited. But when Pullman made an end of his prostration and rose to his feet, the angel was no longer there. He had slipped away at the first opportunity. He took no interest in the private theatricals of this very wicked man, and all he said, on returning to Heaven, was that the beastly sinner had chased him round the room, and seemed disposed to lock him up.

Pullman read through, a second time, the threatening missive, sank down upon a chair, and gave himself up to tears once more. These deadly words affected him more than any earlier heavenly proceedings against him. The sinister face of the winged immortal doubled the effect of the written threat.

He did not want his man to read it, so Pullman tore down the paper pinned up by the angel, and thrust it into his pocket. He began turning over in his mind what the angel had said. The message had been composed by some inferior, or at least not by God. This, oddly enough, supplied him with the wherewithal for hope. How his mind worked was to attribute great importance to the statement *It was not God.* The writing on the wall had not the signature of *God.* It was not a first-class document. Would God have okayed it? He must get an appeal through to God in person. Sammael must not be informed of this, not only because he was a smart alec but because he would in any case be the last person to help him get in touch with God. It would be through a White Angel, most probably, that he could obtain the necessary information, the low-down. Not the kind of angel the last one was. They were most likely as various as any other species.

Pullman had a great deal of confidence in personal contact; if God only *knew* him, all would be well. He would not think like a bureaucrat (and Heaven no doubt was full of little bureaucrats). Pullman's experience of intercourse with the Devil had helped him to imagine an interview with God—the Devil's historic antagonist.

Pullman had developed an unshakable confidence that he would, by some means, establish a direct personal liaison with God. The belief took possession of him so firmly that, whatever message might reach him, he would no longer tremble at these threats. He would say to himself "that is only a subordinate,

a heavenly bureaucrat, sending me these bloodcurdling missives". Soon he would be in touch with the great Lord of All Things.

Intelligence of these events as far as they were known to him, Pullman did not share with anybody. Schlank and he began their evening meals again. They sang their German songs. "O Strassburg, O Strassburg, du wunderschöne Stadt", or "Wir sind die Könige der Welt", found again the rugged vocalists which their composers had had in mind. "O Strassburg" was a great favourite with Pullman, who heartily enjoyed the soldatesque words:

> Darinnen liegt begraben so mannicher Soldat.
> So mancher, so schöner, so braver Soldat,
> der Vater und lieb Mutter so bald verlassen hat.

In his student days in Köln, Strassburg had always attracted him, more than any other neighbouring city, because of its physical beauty. A favourite of both of them was "Wir sind die Könige der Welt"—a lovely drinking song, the sentiments ringing out as gladly up and down the English vocal chords as they did throughout the German. Schlank made an incredible amount of noise during these performances. Satters heard them from his bed, however distantly, and frowned in slumbrous reproach.

Satters' life, moving upon the primitive plane, encountered one figure playing an outstanding rôle. It so happened that one of the gardeners had a son of about Satters' age. They got to know each other with the usual rapidity of their time of life. Satters obtained the game of Sizzle-Wizzle (unknown to Pullman), and they played together an unbelievable amount of Sizzle-Wizzle. This game was a discovery for Bric'dor. When he was free he helped Satters in the park. On two occasions also they had a fight. Satters knocked him down, and afterwards sat on him both times. He was very well pleased with him, because he did not resent defeat; he neither kicked, nor used a knife. Often in the evenings this boy would come up to the flat, and they would play some game, or construct something, such as a full-rigged ship, a cigarette holder, or one of the instruments of torture used at Dis. Satters, further, out of

a large piece of paper, made a Union Jack. When he was told that Matapolis had no flag he was very scornful, which was the cause of the first fight. The second fight was caused by Bric'dor showing Satters how to work the instrument of torture. So he got along all right in spite of Pullman's neglect, and was carving out a quite independent life of his own, where it was possible to give expression to his feelings without constant interference.

## XIX

It was about four months after the Fiesta, and Satters was so proud of the Japanese peony (more or less) which he was growing, that Pullman agreed, after breakfast, to go with him into the park to admire it. Satters had placed it in a miniature glass-house at the farther side of the park. It was just over half a mile across, where everything was still upside down—hardly a park yet. At the highest point of this unfinished strip Satters had established his large glass-covered box, in which the peony grew.

"Why not bring this box up and grow your peony upon our verandah?" Pullman asked him. "There is plenty of sun there."

Satters grunted. He only wanted to hear about the peony —how beautiful it was, how clever was Satters to be responsible for so much beauty. Wonderful Satters. Pullman went down on one knee, and stared through the glass at the peony. It seemed to him miraculously beautiful. It came from the Far-East of the Earth. There physical beauty was understood. The European believed he had evolved spiritual beauty of a high order—but did the spiritual product ever come up to this physical perfection?

A heavy hum in the air attracted Pullman's attention, it was a very unusual vibration. He looked up and saw the entire sky blotted out by a solid mass of angels—individually quite small, they were some distance away. There was something resembling the transparent about this filmy host, in the main very light, with pale blue, and crimson, and dark elongated smudges, also transparent. They were so densely packed that there must have been millions of them. There, towards the top, was a small rather whiter figure: it was the core of the composition, for it was extraordinarily *composed*, this aerial army, reminiscent of the Paradiso of Tintoretto; or better still, of a pastiche of Tintoretto painted by El Greco.

It was then he realized that this was not a parade of angels from the manufacturing town and so on, there were far too many. These were literally millions of glittering points, the swords and armaments of the soldiers of Heaven. *That was God he was looking at, it must actually be He, so intensely bright, and more. Oh it must be He.* As this realization came

to him, and it came with the force of a very high wind, without moving from his position he shook intensely from head to foot. The core of him, the inner being, which normally extended for the full length, shrank and shrivelled. It was as if a small animal was rushing up and down inside him, looking for a place to conceal itself.

Automatically he lowered the other knee, as if he were kneeling in prayer; and he actually began to pray, not looking any longer, however, at the small white figure which he recognised so far away as the mysterious personality into whose incredible ears his prayers somehow found their way.

And then he heard a deep cry, appearing to be almost overhead. As he turned his head a little, he saw the lord Sammael, as he had often seen him before, in his giantly prolongation, still recognisable in all his dazzling handsomeness, a mile and a quarter above the earth. His head was turned over his shoulder, wide-jawed, summoning the angelic citizens. His tremendous sword was visible, the steel flashing like lightning, as he shifted it about. The deep voice roared continually. Pullman looked back at the picture in the sky. It was a little nearer he thought, a little nearer to that familiar giant shouting over Angeltown, frantic no doubt at what he saw. A multitude of thoughts burst like a bomb in Pullman's mind, like the proverbial simultaneous picture of his life which crashes in the mind of a drowning man. His public school, summoned by his fag Satters, collided with the palace of the Bailiff in Third City, his writer's fame seemed to be locked up in Mark's hostel, there was a piercing experience of his youth tangled up with the angel giants by whom he was surrounded. Surrounded he was, for he caught sight of thousands of them; the dark angels were gathering with their flashing swords and their enormous power. A tremor had been induced in the earth by the immense thronging of celestial bodies in the impending atmosphere. But Pullman became aware, suddenly, of a thudding. Satters had turned to gaze above his head, and Pullman followed suit. A look of horror came into his face, for the cause of the thudding was immediately apparent. Giant angel figures were rushing along in their direction. Their enormous swords were dazzling flashes a half mile up in the stark air. It was the muster of Sammael's angels, and one of them was almost overhead. Pullman and Satters instinctively sprang

apart; and at that very moment an enormous sandalled foot, the size of a German farm-cart, crashed down between them. The glass case and the peony vanished beneath this awful tread, and when the angel's foot rose and swept onward there was nothing left but a crushed handful of glass and a meaningless mash of vegetation.

Satters was at a certain distance, his head was whirling about, as he stared at the sky. All the bright colours had excited him like a basket of flowers—it was funny, but he took it, like everything else in a funny existence, as quite natural, as he had the cataclysmic foot which stamped out peonies. Now rushing giants were everywhere. He flung himself recklessly into a pit where the earth had been dug up; it was dry and crumbly earth, and, his two hands scratching wildly, he hollowed out for himself a hole to hide in.

Pullman, too, saw the imminence of other of these converging titans. He wildly attempted to reach the Haus Europa, in a leaping stride. The great foot had hurled him down, and when he rose he was dazed but full of terror. As he leapt he prayed. In an unmanageable frenzy of fear he flew along. Before he reached the house a giant passed him, not more than fifteen yards behind, and his heart hammered as the wind of this passage smote him. More frightened than he had ever been in his life, uncertain as to whether the monster had passed him before or behind, the sweat flooding his back, he reached the house. Watched by the astonished Borp he flung himself into the room and sank into a chair panting and coughing noisily. The servant softly closed the door. His master's exhaustion was so great that Borp for some time stood muzzled before him. At last he unburdened himself. "I have a message from a secretary of the lord Sammael. As soon as he has driven off the enemy hordes . . ." but he got no further.

"Shut up, Borp," his master shouted. "I refuse to listen to that nonsense. I want to receive no more of those messages from the Overlord of Hell. The Lord of Hosts, the God of Gods, has arrived. It is for your salvation that you must beseech Him." Thereupon Pullman prostrated himself, and began praying, his face to the ground. Borp withdrew.

Pullman rose, and found himself alone. But through the window he saw a bright cloud, like the advance across the sky of an insect mass. It was the Heavenly Army surrounding the

position of Angeltown and the house which was now his residence. He shivered, he knelt down beside a massive chair, and began a prayer to God, tears in his eyes.

The light blazed outside. An ocean of light seemed to have settled down around the lair of the lord Sammael—who, Pullman thought, would use that telephone no more. But prophecies affecting the lord Sammael applied also to him. And now he drew himself up upon the armchair and began thinking about his partisanship, regarding the Human Age in contrast to the Divine Age. At that moment he knew that he should never have assisted at the humanisation of the Divine—because he was now in the divine element.

While he was developing a plan of conduct for a mind turning towards the Divine, the flat door burst open and two huge White Angels rushed into the room. He had only time to note that they were quite different from the White Angels who so far had paid him visits, that they were very tall, at least six inches above six foot, from their helmets downwards reminiscent of Roman soldiery, clanking as they walked with a profusion of armament. Their faces had the dazzling pallor of all those belonging to the Heavenly service; both had large grey eyes, the expression of which was not unfriendly, though they had the knitted intensity that came down in a line between the brows. But this was a momentary appraisal. For the first thing he knew was that these two figures had sprung at him, and lifted him bodily out of the chair. There was a harsh whisper in his ear. "No harm will come to you." Pullman had in his nostrils a smell of leather and of polished brass. He fell into a kind of unconsciousness. With a great sound of martial clanking, and with the thudding of their feet, he was borne quickly out of the room. He thought of nothing except God, a thought both felicitous and partaking of the muscular nature of this forced transport. As he passed through the door he could hear the telephone ringing, and Borp's voice as he answered it. He imagined his servant saying, "Mr Pullman is being carried away by two of God's soldiers."

# APPENDIX

synopsis (rejected) of

# THE TRIAL OF MAN

# I

ALL ALONG THAT SIDE of Angeltown, bordering the vast empty space reserved for their manoeuvres, silent, the giant citizenry stood, higher than any but the loftiest mountains, light clouds resting on their shoulders, their faces as unemotional as the hardest material of the earth, their tiny houses collected at their feet. On the other side of the flat waste, the hosts of Heaven lay, ten times as great. A whisper came from them, no more. With perfect ease this multitude had circled above, darkening the land, and settled almost noiselessly, their heads as high above the earth as those following Sammael. After that, a deep silence had set in. The only occurence had been that at the city beyond Angeltown, a mass of gigantic warriors, as many again as those led by Sammael, had risen abruptly into the air; they stood there, as still as mountains, their swords vertical shafts of steel, a hundred yards in width, over a mile in height—rising so far above the earth, as to be, for men, as miraculous and incomparable as the immensities who had rested them vertically there, in preparation for the unimaginable battle.

Suddenly there was the fanfare of a single trumpet, from among the waving hair and tremendous plumes of the angelic invaders; a single figure separated himself from the dense mass, and advanced towards the adherents of Sammael. He came almost naked, his hands empty, innocent of any ornament. His hair was waving in the wind, his face was smiling. He advanced rather more than half way, then he stopped and addressed those before him in a loud sweet voice.

"Angels, why have you brought your swords with you? Do you intend to come out to meet us as if we were wild beasts? We are angels like yourselves. We do not come here to overwhelm you with our number. We wish to attempt to persuade you to scorn to isolate yourselves from the main body of angels, led by the Divine and inexpressible Spirit, Lord God. Angels, we do not believe that, in your hearts, you wish to be

men, pigmies, mortal, vile and despicable. We feel sure that your angelic nature . . ."

"Yes, our angelic nature?" Sammael sprang out from among his followers, roaring: the mad sardonic edge of his bitter words cut the air, rasping on everyone. He leaning backward, swinging his tremendous sword, whirled it over in a sparkling arc, and it descended in the centre of the waving curls of the young messenger. The unarmed, youthful angel plunged down upon his back his lips still smiling. His skull had been bisected, and as he lay, it gaped open, his brains pouring out upon the earth. His legs were sprawled open, as if to emphasise the bisection, and his arms were wide open, stretched out even with the shoulders.

A rough protesting murmur swelled from the ranks of the thousands from Angeltown, and there was a sympathetic murmur from the great host opposite. The sombre note of the outraged thousands still hung in the air, but a new figure advanced from the Heavenly multitude. Bearing arms, this great angel, larger even than Sammael, stopped and shouted:

"Lord Lucifer! Do you in fact desire your unnumerous levy—valiant and strong, but few by comparison—to die to the last one, brutal monster? Or will you leave it to the test of battle between you and me? Answer, wicked beast, born an angel, but . . ."

Sammael's eyes darkening terribly as he listened to those words, sprang up vertically into the air, and the challenger flew up after his, as Sammael, from above, swept his ponderous sword through the intervening ether, hissing like the blade of the guillotine. It cut through the neck of his adversary, whose head, an enormous passionate object, flew away, rolling perhaps for two miles, the length of Angeltown, and the huge body crashed back upon the earth.

Now, Sammael flashed his sword up into the air again, and turned intending to drop himself back into the position he had occupied all along before the action had begun, almost at the head of the line of his followers. But something arriving from diametrically overhead struck him. It was the body of a very large hostile angel, gathered up into a huge ball of bone and flesh. The angelic missile bore him violently downwards. He struck the ground, with a sound like the roar of a mountain

mass, avalanching down to the plain. He screamed in the most terrible way as he met the earth.

It was at once evident that Sammael was very seriously injured. He lay writhing on the ground. Doctors hurried forward, anaesthetics were administered and, with the help of two angels, his body was carried off the field.

Then the most extraordinary scene occurred. Thousands of unarmed Angels advanced from the front of the heavenly Army. They came smiling, their arms outstretched: and as they reached the proximity of Sammael's followers, the latter lay down their arms too and went to meet them. Then they were wildly embracing one another, tears pouring down their cheeks, both sides abandoning themselves to an orgy of brotherhood.

## II

The evening was dark. In Ward One of the Hospital Angels—the best of the private wards—it was sombre. The patient lay quite still. The ward Sister sat in an austere but curiously comfortable chair, near the door. The patient groaned, the Sister looked over towards him, keeping her head erect and alert for a minute or two; then she slowly turned back to her knitting, which the darkness made very difficult for her to go on with. There was a light step in the passage outside, and a low tinkling. The tinkling was almost continuous. She lifted her head again: the next moment a tall man stood hesitating in the doorway. As he stood there, his presence seemed accompanied by the sound of small bells; and the Sister was able to identify almost at once a cluster of small bells attached to the hem of his garment.

The Stranger was dressed a bluish-purple which only escaped being white by the admixture of a small amount of colour. High on his massive shoulders was a heavy hood. Out of this rose his large expressive head; this was of so majestic a kind that the Sister rose to her feet, crossing herself without knowing why she did so. She had not done this since she was on earth. Then she stepped back, growing a little pale.

"How is the patient, Sister?" The voice was very deep, but moderated, out of consideration for the sick.

"As well as can be expected, sir. The lord Sammael is a good patient."

Sammael's right leg had beem amputated the day before, shortly after his arrival at the hospital.

"A good patient?" echoed, gently, the Stranger. "What is good, Sister?" he asked with a smile. "I am not used to the phraseology of the Clinic. A good man, I suppose, might be a very (bad?) patient."

"That is so."

"And a very bad man might be a very good patient."

"Yes sir. They often are."

The Sister had by now become familiar with the magnificent geography of this superb face: the broad forehead, surmounted by heavy blue-grey hair, the light lines not seemingly drawn there by nature, but by the man himself—they had so voluntary an appearance; she knew by the soft compulsions of the deep grey eyes—and as to the expression of this stately countenance, she knew that in every emotion expressed there, a vast indifference must seemingly be mixed into any expression of feeling. As she stood there she found herself acquiring the proportion appropriate to her of non-participatory phlegm.

There was nothing personal pressing on her from this big machine: and this indifference, or this apathy, delighted her, without her knowing what was responsible for such a reaction. Here, at last, was someone asking nothing of her personality, who was a selfless expanse, of indifference (free of the selfish pressures which are emitted by all men and women, who are so unrelievedly functional).

From her young days she remembered "Where there is nothing there is" . . . oh, what was it that there was? Something like *this* . . . something which was not zero, as she had always supposed this meant. No- that *nothing* of her early teachers meant somewhere where *nothing* oppressively human was to be found—nothing functional, that loved and hated, nothing that uncomfortably *willed* and wanted—something which *had* everything. But that was the reverse of nothing, was it not? Yes, the reverse, the Sister thought, the greatest degree of the opposite of nothing which it is possible to imagine.

But the head of the patient was sticking bolt upright from the pillow, a furious eye fixed upon her—upon *her*, as if she were alone.

"Sister: What was that voice I heard? What was that speaking? *Sister!* I insist on knowing!"

"There was nothing, Lord Sammael. Absolutely nothing."

"You lie! I saw a shadow. It was the shadow of someone I know."

There was nothing of that divine nothingness about that man, no. There was all *Will* there! The Sister shrank.

"No, Lord Sammael," she said in a low voice. "Only shadows. It is so dark an evening."

"You lie, Sister! I saw the shadow of the Beast of Heaven! He was there! I smelt him... I smelled the lump of butter which would not melt in his dirty mouth. I smelled the fug of the Goodness—of Someone who is too disgustingly inhuman to live—even in Heaven. Who calls himself All Father, but has not the guts to pup a single son. Whose Son had to be born of a Virgin! I smelled that great absence of guts—that big Nothing we call God."

The old Sister crossed herself. He saw what she was doing, and he thrust himself up in bed violently, and spat out the word which he was prompted to utter, as a dog is obliged to bark.

"A fucking Catholic, by Jesus! A lying old Papist, as ever was! Who was it stuck that filth in this Ward—who was it, I wonder! I'll bet it was the new House Surgeon I picked out of Dis and appointed only last week." He spat. "I will kick him out with this foot they have left me to hobble with: (who was that surgeon who sawed off my leg—he was masked! Very convenient, that white mask they slip on, to provide them with much-needed anonymity!)"

Sammael collapsed in the pillow, breathing heavily.

The Sister heard a light step in the passage without. Almost at the same moment the Lord Sammael flung himself out of bed, shouting.

"Why are you snooping around here, snot-face! This hospital does not belong to you. You get out of it! If you don't get your ugly carcass out of this hospital before I've counted ten I will have you taken to the operating theatre, and I will cut your eyes out, God! And I may carve you down the middle as I chopped your messenger's head in half yesterday, and that rabble of yours can take you back to Heaven in pieces, two

halves of God—which they will not stick together again, believe me, Yah—yah—*Yah*—way!"

Sammael lay panting on the floor. In sliding out of bed he had fallen upon the bandaged stump, from which blood was now pouring. Almost immediately two doctors rushed, followed by a nurse, into the Ward. Finding their patient with a dangerous haemorrhage, they lifted him onto the bed, administered a mild prevoir, plugged the gushing artery. One of the doctors and a nurse remained by his side. The Ward Sister stood on the other side of the bed. She had heard him shouting from the floor and was aware of the identity of the Stranger, who had been able to administer this fearful rage in him. She stood there repeating to herself. "I have actually conversed with the heavenly Father of all things," and she trembled, crossing herself. But seeing the eye of the Nurse fastened on her, she coughed heavily, parodying the Sign—as though in carrying her hand to her mouth, she always moved her hand in that way: she blew her nose, stepping away in doing so, as if to avoid disturbing the patient. But when she turned back she saw the Nurse whispering to the doctor, who now, in turn, was watching her. However, she settled her hand in position beneath her apron, and resumed her station, facing the other two watchers.

As the young doctor continued to look at her, the Ward Sister turned away, walked around the bed, and sat down again by the door. She had remembered, almost at once, that this young doctor, was a protegé of Professor Jungman. This certainly meant that those small blue eyes scrutinising her, might put her in great danger. When she was drafted to this institution, eight years before, she had an interview with Professor Josef Jungman, who in his postion as Director, insisted that it was his duty to question every newly-appointed member of the staff. As a Hungarian Jew, he spoke to her in German. Quite evidently her name—that of one of the oldest families in Vienna—displeased him. He was against women being sent there from Dis—although himself as a Professor of Medicine, he had been rescued from Dis, and received this much-coveted Directorship. He put her through an interrogation of the most searching kind. To what circle had she belonged in Vienna? Did she know Princesse von Blasewitz?—the Baroness Stuma von Rachtenberg—Volksturm? Both those

ladies she had known very well. But they were preeminantly political women, and she had answered cautiously that she had certainly *met* them, but that the politics of the Princesse had been rather strong meat, and she went to a church of a more liberal kind from that favoured by the Princesse, the Glaubenkirche. And what church was *hers*? he had asked. She claimed to have belonged to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which in reality she was far from favoring because of the depreciation of the Nationalist cause by its Vicar. Though Professor Jungman was not completely satisfied, he had passed her in.

In view of all this she prayed with a special fervency that this young doctor would not report that the Sister of Ward One had been caught in the act of crossing herself, by the bedside of Lord Sammael.

The first thing her patient had done the following morning, upon regaining consciousness, was, fixing a bloodshot eye upon her, to exclaim.

"Idolatress! Are you still there at watch over me! Have you been praying around me for my extinction, holy woman?"

But on this occasion it was another doctor, not the young protegé of the director, and he paid no attention to what the patient said. For the rest, Sammael was too weak from loss of blood to say anything more to the Sister.

## III

It was some days after, that, as Sammael's dressings were being renewed, that a bell began tolling. These devices for the protection of the souls of the dead—protection against demons—very naturally had never been heard in Matapolis or in Angeltown. Because of their well-known tendency to jar the ears of the master of those cities, no bell had ever been manufactured there. In his expeditions to the earth, Sammael had been much afflicted by the sound of Church bells, of electric bells in houses, and, while in England, by the inexcusable noise made by the Muffin Man. But *here in Angeltown* any toleration of a ringing sound produced inside a piece of metal was so unthinkable, that, for the front door bell, the much less

convenient device of a rat-tat-tat on the door was employed. In the case of large public buildings, a human voice crashed out of a gramophonic installation above the door. It cried, "Visitor!" "You are wanted!"—Telephones have a horn, and so on.

So Sammael stiffened and his face became so congested with blood that the Nurse supposed he was going to have a fit. She was about to summon a doctor (by means of blowing into a house-telephone which, at the other end, sounded a horn) when Sammael burst into apoplectic speech.

"What the Jesus is that?" he demanded violently, with his favorite oath.

"What is that, Lord Sammael?" the Nurse replied, astonished.

"What a fathead bitch! Can you not hear that bell? What do you use your ears for?" He pulled roughly at her nearest ear.

"Oh", the girl said, wrenching her head angrily away. "Oh *that*. I was wondering what that was."

"Oh you were, were you! *Wondering* were you, dolt! Get me the Director!"

"I shan't be more than a minute or two more sir," she drawled disagreeably. He slapped her hand away from what she was working on.

"*Now* scum! Not next week!"

Without a word, her face a dull red, the girl rose and left the Ward.

"Quicker than that, you sleepy cow!" Sammael bellowed after her.

The bell tolled on. Where was it coming from? From Angeltown, that was certain enough. Some criminal had rigged up a bell in his house. What bell? Where did he get it from? From a heavenly angel, probably. Does he not understand . . .?

The Director of The Hospital entered. Dark-faced, obviously much Magyar blood, with sharp angry eyes, and a thin straight mouth. He said politely to the Ward Sister, "Sister, please go to Ward Two and lend a hand to the Sister there. I shall be coming to Ward Two soon".

He went to Sammael, dropped into the chair at his side and lighted a cigarette. Neither spoke until the steps of the Sister had receded. Sammael spoke first.

"You can get me well, Professor, quicker than if I were a mere man?"

"Oh yes," said the Director. "But not as quick as you *ought* to be well."

"What do you mean, as I *ought* to?"

The Professor shrugged. "You know what I mean all right... I received a visit from no less a person than that... guess Sammael?"

"God Almighty?"

"No less a person." The Professor laughed. "A very charming gentleman. I offered him a cigarette, he smiled and shook his head. 'I'm afraid of you doctors. I might smoke that cigarette, go to sleep, and wake up on an operating table'."

"I wish I had him on an operating table!" growled Satan-minus-a-leg.

"You never will, Sam Satan. He's much too smart. Now, listen to me. He is turning this place upside down. I shall not be here much longer. He has taken over, as His temporary office, Angel's Hall."

Sammael sat up in bed, rigid, his eyes glaring at the doctor with so mad a scrutiny, that his visitor pushed his chair back out of reach.

"Easy, easy!" he exclaimed, "I am not your enemy. All I am saying is, you must speed your recovery."

"Why don't you do that!" roared Sammael. "Don't you know any tricks?"

"I'm not all that smart!" protested the Professor. "Your belief in Man is exaggerated, Sammael! ... Look at yourself—you have a leg off at the groin. We can't put it back on again—we're only doctors. We can cut things off—we cannot put them back on. Why don't you make use of your supernatural powers? *You* are the magician, aren't you. Mobilise your magic!"

Sammael had sunk back on his pillow. "Don't waste time, Professor! If we put our heads together, we might produce something magical. I can fly out of the window. I can go miles into the air—but that's about all. I have got a man's body; if I lose a leg or arm, well, that's that. I might be able to grow one. But that would take some time. Now, Doctor, what steps must I take to speed up my recovery?"

The Professor rose, and strolled towards the door, looked

up and down the passage, and strolled back again. He resumed his seat, and, his elbows on his knees, leaned towards the bed.

"The Americans," he said, "in the course of their wars, have applied their inventive minds to the problem of quick recoveries. In my office is something suited to your case. It is not worth while to hand this to my surgeons; quick recoveries interest no one here; and there is some risk attached to the use of this particular preparation. Will you take a chance with it?"

Sammael nodded. "Oh yes. How long will the cure take?"

"You will be walking about in a week—that is the idea."

"Professor, what is that bell doing?" Sammael nodded his head towards the window.

"That is the Passing Bell," the Professor told him, with a wink. "That is your friend from Heaven, doubtless. He is telling you that your number is up."

"He is an optimist. By ringing a bell he is not going to get rid of me."

The doctor barked a little friendly laugh. "Now, the treatment," he said. "That will begin at once. I shall send along a Nurse, who is a special friend of mine. Help matters along in any way you can . . . And, Sammael, if I am removed before you are well, continue this treatment on the sly. The Nurse I am sending may be able to assist you. But refuse to take anything else. I will give you a few instructions about that on how to outsmart the directorate." The doctor went towards the door. "I am going to push off somewhere else that Ward Sister, who is a breastcrossing old bitch."

"Professor, I am beholden to you."

## IV

The American Speed Cure produced a score of alarming reactions. At one time his tongue was so parched that he drank bucketsful of lemon juice, at another time his eyes streamed with water, and then the stump hurt so much that an anaesthetic was administered.

For several days Sammael was so subdued by these sensations, that when the new Ward Sister upset the lemon-juice all over his heaving torso—for he was breathless for the greater part

of the day—he just rolled his eyes and said nothing. When one of his most influential appointees at Dis came to see him he could neither speak nor listen. But the second half of the "week of American recovery," as he called it, was different. He began to feel better; and he experienced so much exhilaration, that it was all the doctors could do to prevent him from leaving the Hosiptal.

It was during this period of crazy euphrasia that Dr. Hachilah's visit was announced. He had him sent up. Sammael's frightful joy staggered Dr. Hachilah. But when his visitor informed him that he was one of a hundred members of the Dis staff—more particularly those appointed by Sammael—who had been dismissed, it was only in a last minute wrestling match between two doctors and himself that he was restrained from going down to Dis there and then. With another spasm of impotent rage he learnt that the entire directorate of Dis had been changed. The visitor, as he was continuing to report enormities, was hurried out by doctors, in spite of bellows of protest from Sammael.

No other visitor was admitted, until, on the morning of the seventh day, his wooden stump was adjusted, and he was allowed to practice locomotion.

"No, Sammael," said the Director, "wait until tomorrow. Your great enemy will take advantage of your invalid condition. We have a very powerful young doctor here. Practise on him first—I will send him to Ward One. Your Heavenly Adversary will wear your out, to start with. Afterwards I should not be surprised if he got several hefty Angels to break your other leg."

The boiling patient was sufficiently dampened down for him to stop where he was. It was not until two days later that Sammael thumped his way out of the hospital, entered his best car, and drove to Angel's Hall.

When he arrived at the main entrance, he found it packed with people, on what errand he could not guess. After touring around the building he took up his position at a certain distance, and surveyed the throngs. But almost at once a gentle voice sounded in his ear. His "Heavenly Adversary" as the

Professor called him, was standing at the window of the car.

"Sammael," he said, "were you looking for me?"

The face at the window was very serious, even stern. The dignity of this ageing face was terrifying. The face of one who had accepted power and all its consequences, in contrast to the aspiration to Eternal Youth of his favorite associate in past days, and contrasted too with the "democratic" attitudes favored by Sammael.

The full extent of the vulgarity, of the desire to acquire popularity with men by adopting human tricks of behaviour to cause man to forget the supernatural basis of his being: all this vast modification not only in the bearing but in the outlook of this Creature, once so well-known to Him, it would require prolonged observation for God to apprehend. But as God stood at the car window, gazing at this still youthful face, he began to realise the great change which had taken place, in this once mighty archange. *This* was not the Son of the Morning; it was a man who had lost a leg.

Sammael, for his part, resented this massive, intense countenance, that of a King. The large eyes blazing coldly at him, seeming to play on his mind rather than upon his mere facial mask. This old magician of the cloudy wastes of Heaven! How *fresh* he looked—it was as if He were gazing upon him for the first time! He suddenly experienced an acute irritation with his "youthful" role. That, after all, was a *human* role—which had been fastened on him in the beginning. This greatest of Leaders choosing the better role of the "Ancient of Days." *He* had preferred the role of a God; he, Sammael, had been left with the dubious advantages of a "Jeune Premier". And at this first moment of contact Sammael felt insignificant, and he had never felt that way before.

"Sammael, look, that small greenish door, at the base of the building, leads to a cellar. I have been working there. Will you ask your chauffeur to drive up to it, and I shall be there almost as quickly as you are."

"Very well," Sammael answered. And he told the chauffeur what to do.

When Sammael got out of his car, he was recognized by someone standing near the entrance. This man raised his hat, and in answer Sammael made a gesture of greeting, and smiled with an almost American cordiality.

"Currying favour" was the comment of the striding God, as he approached.

The Heavenly Intruder opened the door, and led Sammael into the crypt of Angel-Hall. It was full of clerks who stopped work at their entrance, and remained with heads bowed as God led the way through the middle of the angelic secretariat, and into a sizable room beyond. He seated himself upon a large chair, evidently placed there for visitors. Once he had settled himself, Sammael said, "What are you doing in Angeltown? Did you first take my leg, and then take possession?"

"Hardly that," God was steadily unsmiling. "You know why I have been obliged to come here. The necessary tidying up wich I feel I should do, led me to improvise an Office. You were still very ill, and I did not appear to be a welcome visitor exactly. Since the government of this place is in your hands, there was no one else to whom I could apply. So I presumed you would have no objection . . ."

"No?"

"We are the oldest friends in the world, Sammael." God's voice was soft. "Friends of so long a standing, reaching back to the beginning of time, that meun and teum . . ."

"If you mean that I have no independent existence you are mistaken. There is a meum and teum in thought, as in chairs and tables, and it is a very important difference. I am quite aware that you have increasingly resented my basing my behaviour on principles I have evolved myself. You suddenly arrived here, at the head of the armies of Heaven, because of this, and in order to coerce me . . . I am unable to resist you, because the force I can dispose of is inferior to yours."

"That is like your old self, although you have changed a great deal I think."

"Of course, I have changed. That is why you have come here."

"There is no harm in changing, if you do not change for the worse."

Sammael raised his eyebrows. "That," he said, "is a matter of opinion, what is *better* and what is *worse*. Besides, what business is it of yours?"

"That is an absurd question." God frowned slightly. "Have you forgotten you are responsible for the good conduct of Hell? That these are my creatures?"

Sammael leaned forward. "No, I am in no way responsible. It is you who have thrust me into the position of Devil. Oh yes."

"That is only true if you mould and manipulate the facts."

Sammael rose quickly to his feet.

"No manipulation is necessary. This region, too, and everything in it is mine. You are not, as you appear to believe yourself to be, a supernatural overlord. The conditions you have created in Dis and the alterations you have been permitting yourself, not only in Dis, but elsewhere. It is as a result of conquest, or the equivalent of conquest, that you sit there, that you behave in this way. I cannot stop you." God, too, rose to his feet. His dense face seemed to become still more packed with something. "It is because your angels defaulted, and came back to me their original leader. You always cook the facts, so as to arrive at your melodramatic conclusions."

Sammael stomped up to the table, behind which God stood, and shook his index finger in his face.

"That is heavenly poppycock. All right, President of the Trinity!—Take over Dis, it is certainly more your cup of tea than mine. I wish you joy of this charnel-house. But in some way or other I will pay you out for this—old tyrant! Do not imagine you can put your hand in my pockets (while I am sick in bed) and rob me, Lord God no longer Almighty."

Sammael stomped his way out through the secretaries, and departed from the hall he had built, now passed into other hands. On the way back to the hospital he forgot where he was, his mind a tornado.

# THE TRIAL OF MAN

Wyndham Lewis never lived to write the fourth volume of *The Human Age* which was to be entitled *The Trial of Man* and would have been the *Paradiso* of the tetralogy. Hugh Kenner, who has written an important study of Wyndham Lewis and who had several conversations with him regarding *The Trial of Man*, was asked by the Publishers of the Jupiter Edition to prepare this article, describing the fourth volume, so that readers would have an idea of the author's intention. It is followed by a draft rejected opening, which has never before appeared in print.

# THE TRIAL OF MAN

## HUGH KENNER

With a few axe-blows, Wyndham Lewis in the late 1920's split *The Childermass* off a huge work he had been for some years constructing: a satirico-fantastico-polemic omnium-gatherum he called *The Man of the World.* As though bolts of lightning had melted together *Gargantua and Pantagruel,* the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the collected works of Thomas Nashe, this grotesque cumbersome pantechnicon filled up his work-room, unpublishably long, irrepressibly vigorous. *The Childermass* was one of its details merely; dismembered, it yielded whole books. At least three more of its massive members were separately issued: *The Apes of God, The Art of Being Ruled, Time and Western Man.* Other volume-length sections remain unpublished to this day.

Though his satires, his fictions, his polemics, even his paintings form unmistakeably one work, it was the unique destiny of *The Childermass* to be always the fragment of something, and always, as his purest work of imagination, to press toward a conclusion it never wholly achieved. Having been detached from one huge system, it was finally appropriated by another, the titanic conception of *The Human Age,* which in turn contained the springs of an unwritten conclusion. Between these events, from 1928 till the early 1950's, *The Childermass* lay in collections and libraries and on second-hand shelves, a monstrous unlovely fragment for historians of literature to step around. Though Parts II and III were announced as immediately forthcoming, Lewis apparently wrote not a word of them. He grumbled about the perfidy of publishers, and worked at other things, scarcely more marketable. A small voice presumably, deep down amidst his frantic system of energy, kept warning him that to press forward with *The Childermass* would be to press forward into a void; the subject, out there in the public world, had not yet finished articulating itself. Anyhow, he waited for a quarter-century, while the mise-en-scène of *The Childermass,* the post-war No Man's Land of the 1920's, with its

clutter of façades like a Paris art movement and its drearily active personnel, Steins and Sitwells and Alchemists of the Wort, gave way, amid world-wide cataclysms, to that middle-class heaven on earth the Welfare State, its Joyous Gard the Lubianka Prison in Moscow, and its creative orgasm the Festival of Britain at Battersea.

For it was in Mr. Attlee's England between 1952 and 1954 that Lewis at last wrote the second and third parts of the work, much preoccupied with the realities an inhabitant of that England knew how to take for granted. If *The Human Age* like most fantasies is a familiar world extrapolated, it differs from most fantasies in its concern not with social textures nor with communal customs, but with the processes, which we call "political" when we discuss their technologies, by which people's lives are shaped. For many years Lewis had argued that what passes for political discussion is discussion of techniques merely; that the real subject of politics, always suppressed, is the metaphysics of power; that power flourishes because people respond to talk of freedom but prefer not to be really free; and that power is almost always wielded by the worst.

This is, like all radical political theories, a theory about the nature of man and the nature of the universe in which he finds himself. This being so, we can see why it asks to be completed by something like a theology. We can also understand the mixture of genres by which *The Childermass*, when Lewis first conceived it, was implicated in the pages of *The Art of Being Ruled* and *Time and Western Man*. It is a vision of the identical reality which *The Art of Being Ruled* surveys, a different kind of vision but formulated in the same brain in response to the same valuations of the same public experiences. And those valuations were and remained Manichean.

The Manichean is he who, declining to worship evil, declines also to hope for anything better than a stalemate. No one's life, no people's experience, not the human race itself, tends in any direction; to believe otherwise, Lewis thought, is to apotheosize Time. Power, God's ultimate Ape, is content to rest in its own swinish immutable being, a fact before which God himself seems powerless. Man, Lewis was all those years convinced, is insignificant, and power is always wielded by vulgarians. "An animal in every respect upon the same footing

as a rat or an elephant," wrote Lewis of man in 1934, "—man, except for what the behaviouriasts term his wordhabit, is that and no more, except for his paradoxical 'reason'." The paradoxical "reason" is "the god in us," and when it considers its estate it explodes with laughter. Men accept rulers. To rule, as the comparison with rat and elephant implies, is an animal instinct. The wielders of any kind of power are animals dominating animals less fierce. "Reason" cloaks this phenomenon in flattering theory. So much for political science.

There are, however, exceptional men, in whom the reason is accentuated to the point we call genius. These men, the Galileos and Dantes who make all of history that is worth remembering, though never the part that is officially remembered, are invariably exiled or persecuted or otherwise interfered with. To save themselves from such interference they will sometimes align themselves, if they can gain his confidence, with some possessor of power, as Pullman in the Third City cooperates with the Bailiff.

> It was made clear to you that the role which had been yours on earth was essentially diabolic. To your confusion, your faithfulness to your earthly part in this play led you into the strangest supernatural company. . . . as in my own case, you would find yourself involved with a powerful demon, whereas on Earth he would merely be dear old so-and-so, a rich patron of the arts, or a go-ahead publisher.

Pullman is the archetypal genius, specialising in uneasy alliances; the Bailiff is the archetypal man of power. More: the Bailiff is the incarnate *Zeitgeist,* the congeries of hearty notions by which men agree to be flattered, titillated, and so governed. He is a popular tyrant; he is in fact the populace *as* tyrant, the presiding spirit of democratic times, but malign and diabolic for all that. He is the romantic machiavel, the Don Juan at home in hell and indistinguishable from Mephistopheles; the cheerful cozener who explained to a not unwilling Eve, with much show of objectivity, the benefits of the apple. He is the prince of this world, and he makes it go round. Every story in every newspaper is at bottom about his activities, in one of his protean guises; only bailiffry makes men active enough to attract notice, and the only activity they

are likely to aspire to is the Punch-and-Judy kind in which he specialises. "Our period is like a person, in short," Lewis wrote in 1927, "just as we are less and less like one; the secret of its being is technically expressed in terms of 'mass-psychology'." The Bailiff, mass-psychology personified, is the greatest satiric creation of the 20th century imagination. In the opinion of Lewis he was simply the most pervasive 20th century reality, dark, vulgar, empty; and James Pullman enters into alliance with him.

And James Pullman later allies himself with a more austere fiend, the Lord Sammael: a still more compromising alliance. This strict being, proud in his angelic estate, calmly punishes man for being man. That, by implication, was what Lubianka and Dachau were invented for; no crimes, nothing less than a state of being, could inspire such horrors, or justify them in the minds of those who administered them, doing, it would seem, Sammael's work on earth. The Jews and the deviationists who were the official victims of such places would seem to have been surrogates for humanity itself, its guilt for being human accurately estimated, though sentence at Dachau was pronounced by human judges. "On principle," says Sammael, "I approve of punishing Man just for being Man;" for "Those animals fill me with horror, they cause me such inexpressible disgust that it is as much as I can do to go near them." The Woman-sinners disgust him especially; "the nursery, the procreative side of man" seems to him "that nastiest innovation of my colleague God the Father." And Pullman disagrees with none of this. Genius, it seems, is vulnerable to such arguments; the genius of a satirist—a Lewis or a Swift—is even apt to frame them. Sammael is not cheap as the Bailiff and his ilk are cheap. He and genius can understand one another. Genius, it seems, is not really human.

So much is clear from *The Human Age* as we have it. The function of genius, apparently, is to reduce to zero, by sheer penetrating intellection, the value of the order of beings to which the genius cannot but belong. For if genius is not human in essence it is human in condition. And either this is an extraordinary mistake on the part of the creator, or the whole Lewisian system of values is wrong. And Lewis actually braced himself to consider the latter possibility. It is the most extraordinary deed in his long career. At the age of 73 he

commenced to re-examine, at long last, the premises on which he had conducted all his writing. This re-examination was meant to issue in yet another book; there are traces of it in the book we have. Toward the close of *Malign Fiesta* Pullman entertains a reflection that challenges the whole of the preceding work:

> God *values* man: that is the important thing to remember. It is this valuing that is so extraordinary. ... The only value for Sammael is solipsistic. I, Pullman, am acting in a valueless vacuum called Sammael.

It is indeed this valuing that is extraordinary. And for the conviction that man is valuable the satires Lewis had achieved since 1929 would seem to leave no room. Indeed the first version of *Malign Fiesta,* a radio script commissioned by the BBC, left no room for the valuing of anything, or even for the acknowledging of anything except gigantic manifestations of power. Not even for genius itself; genius itself, Pullman himself, was in this first version obliterated, accidentally stepped on by a dark angel, one of the Lord Sammael's mustering host. His life, it would seem, was to have been like all lives inextricably absurd; in just such a wanton annihilation all Wyndham Lewis's novels had terminated.

Lewis was at that time blind, chronically poor, physically useless. Had his bleak vision of human existence been the product of his reduced and impotent state we should not have been surprised; but it was the product of his flashing prime. The product of his old age and blindness was just the opposite: the proposal to rebuild everything from the beginning (enough work for a second lifetime) on the premise that man is valuable and valued, valued by God. He proposed, then, to write a fourth book, *The Trial of Man,* a celebration of the Divine. It is as though the aging inventor of Yahoos had suddenly begun to metamorphose into the celebrant of the *Divine Comedy.* One can feel no surprise that *The Trial of Man* was never written. One can only feel awe before the indomitable honesty that proposed, in those last years, to undertake it.

Preparing his bridge into the proposed fourth part, which would have to be written, like the preceding two, in longhand by a blind man, five or six wavering lines to a page on thousands of pages, he equipped *Malign Fiesta* with a new

ending, the one that stands in the present text. The angelic foot came squashing down as before, but not on Pullman, rather on a peony. This plant receives a few lines of homage. It had come from the Far East of the Earth. "There physical beauty was understood. The European believed he had evolved spiritual beauty of a high order—but did the spiritual product ever come up to this physical perfection?" The spiritual, as the Dark Angels demonstrate, is corruptible; genius itself is corruptible; certainly Pullman is. The dark angel's tread, in this recast version, annihilates not just Pullman but something perfect:

> The glass case and the peony vanished beneath this awful tread, and when the angel's foot rose and swept onward there was nothing left but a crushed handful of glass and a meaningless mass of vegetation.

Man is capable of no such perfection as the peony: that seems to have been Lewis's first working premise as he considered the new book. The peony, however, being perfect, demonstrates God's ability to achieve the perfect. And being destroyed, it demonstrates that the perfect is not immutable; the diabolic can annihilate it. But Pullman is saved, because the power of the diabolic over man has limits. The limits are set by God, who values (we return to the mystery) imperfect man.

"God is a big problem," Lewis wrote to Geoffrey Bridson late in 1951, when he had just begun to consider the shape of the still-unwritten parts II and III. He could be kept, as it proved, out of sight and often out of mind throughout these parts; but in part IV, *The Trial of Man*, there could be no more dodging of the Big Problem. It is, simply, who is He? and has his power limits?

At an unknown date, presumably in 1955, Lewis drafted a trial opening, printed in this edition for the first time (see page 000). There God appears, incognito, to a nursing sister in the Angeltown hospital:

> . . . the broad forehead, surmounted by heavy blue-grey hair, the light lines not seemingly drawn there by nature but by the man himself—they had so voluntary an appearance; . . . and as to the expression of this stately

countenance, she knew that in every emotion expressed there, a vast indifference must seemingly be mixed into any expression of feeling.

This "selfless expanse of indifference (free of the selfish pressures emitted by all men and women, who are so unrelievedly functional)" is a first approximation to something new in the Lewis cosmos, a person (and God) who shall not letch and coerce and contrive, shall will without crowding those on whom his will works, shall not be as the Bailiff or even as James Pullman, beings whose personality is tainted with the theatricality of the human. Lewis even incorporates a famous tag of Yeats:

> From her young days she remembered, "Where there is nothing there is" ... oh, what was it that there was? Something like *this* ... something which was not zero, as she had always supposed this meant. No—that *nothing* of her early teachers meant somewhere where nothing oppressively human was to be found—nothing functional, that loved and hated, nothing that uncomfortably *willed* and wanted—something which *had* everything. But that was the reverse of nothing, was it not? Yes, the reverse, the Sister thought, the greatest degree of the opposite of nothing which it is possible to imagine.

God, however, must function in a novel, where one needs conflict and opposition. To secure these requisites, "this old magician of the cloudy wastes of Heaven," looking as Sammael comes to see unquenchably *fresh,* the ageless Ancient of Days, must somehow be made, in the words of Sammael's taunt, "no longer Almighty." A Manichean theology was thrusting itself up irresistably, prompted by the very nature of fiction, into the fiction that was meant to repudiate it. Lewis discarded this opening (it was found among his papers labelled "rejected synopsis") and began considering the scheme of the book more abstractly. In late August 1955, three months before parts II and III were published, he provided the following summary:

> *The Human Age* is the title at present of what I have done, but I am proposing to write a further book which will necessitate an alteration of the overall title. You

will notice that *Malign Fiesta* significantly ends by two White Angels carrying off Pullman. He finds himself, in the final book, in the Celestial Camp. This is very much to his satisfaction. *Monstre Gai* shows him entrapped by the Bailiff, in whose power he reluctantly remains. There is a passage in that book in which he analyses his dilemma (it occurs in the covered walk along the side of Tenth Piazza). The Bailiff is, of course, not Divine. Then the same situation is repeated in *Malign Fiesta*, only even more tragically, and the figure in that case is Divine, though Diabolic. In the last book of all the hero, Pullman, is at last in Divine Society. He favours the Divine. I favour the Divine. There is a gigantic debate, in which Sammael's purpose to combine the Human and the Angelic, is discussed, the Celestial spokesmen naturally attacking Sammael's big idea. In the discussions (in *Malign Fiesta*) between Pullman and his master, the Devil, all of the latter's plan is revealed —in order to save his life Pullman gives it his support. But Pullman is, of course, an adherent of the Divine, not of the Diabolic. Under these circumstances, a new overall title will be required. . . .

[Letter to Hugh Kenner, August 29, 1955]

"He favours the Divine." He does not, that is, favour the Bailiff, who we remember is not divine. But Sammael as well as God is divine, and it is not clear that Sammael's repudiation of the human was at variance with anything Pullman's intellect told him. Certainly when he was writing *Malign Fiesta* much of Lewis's energy flowed into Sammael, in passages that he passed for publication well after he had decided to compose the sequel. For Lewis had much invested in Sammael; if the Bailiff is all that in the old days Lewis had opposed, Sammael is very nearly the Lewis who had opposed it, in satire which he described in *Men Without Art* (1934) as a metaphysical, not a moral, criticism of man. To vindicate man, or to vindicate the God who made man, having placed Sammael's statements about man on record, would involve more than the construction of a plot, or the staging of a gigantic debate. It would involve a psychic withdrawal from the sympathy and fascination out of which he had first created

Sammael. He did not shirk even this. In November 1956, having in the interim occupied himself with two other books, he was still making the effort.

In conversations in that chilly month, the last November of his life, Lewis described the point which he had by then reached. The Trial of Man, the gigantic debate, was to be an episode merely. The theme of the book was now to be Pullman's slow acclimatization to the Celestial environment. He was not merely to favour the Divine, he was to find his home at last in the divine milieu, the first character in any Wyndham Lewis work to achieve a meaningful destiny. René Harding in *Self Condemned*, who discovered the secret of History, suffered the doom of any Prometheus; eviscerated by implacable malignance, he ended his career in an academic "cemetery of shells"; "and the Faculty had no idea that it was a glacial shell of a man who had come to live among them, mainly because they were themselves unfilled with anything more than a little academic stuffing." Father Augustine Card in *The Red Priest* (the last novel Lewis completed, the novel in fact for which he deferred his work on *The Trial of Man*) sought to carry to the ear of the ultimate Eskimo the word that there was no God but God, and when the ultimate Eskimo tried to steal his wallet strangled him in fury and was himself butchered by the Eskimo's companions. Their destiny (their insight?) drove these men mad. But Pullman was not to go mad; he was to come home, to Heaven.

Lewis's mind in those last days was taken up with Pullman, with whom his imagination had now identified itself. Sammael interested him little, as did satire. Not even God seemed by then the book's central problem; he thought that Milton had been mistaken to introduce God in person, and rather inclined to take Milton's lapse for a warning. He had concluded, after so many years' involvement in the death agonies of the Europe he had known as a boy, that its tragedy lay in its loss of a common religion. He spoke of his mother, a Catholic who had ceased to practice her faith without, apparently, repudiating it, and of his own growing interest in the Old Religion. He spoke of being converted, if he could find the right instructor. He was no longer interested in the dozens of earlier books in which he had invested so much that was incompatible with the divinization of Pullman; not only illness and fatigue, it

seemed, but a new quality of preoccupation with human destiny had made them dwindle in his mind.

Crises of thought, preceding a new release, were familiar to him. His entire career had been just such an affair of subterranean regroupings of energy, and subsequent novelties no one could have foreseen. Who, reading *Tarr*, could have forecast *The Revenge for Love*, or expected Vorticism to issue in the great portraits of 1938? Had Lewis been ten years younger *The Trial of Man* might have inaugurated yet another, and utterly radical, new beginning. But he had passed his 74th. birthday; the tumor behind his forehead that had blinded him was invading vital areas of the brain; and in March 1957 he died in such a hospital as had seemed to the creator of Dr. Hachilah the ultimate theatre of inhumanity. There is a persistent tradition that his last words were "Mind your own business!", addressed to an officious enquirer after the welfare of his bowels. *The Trial of Man* remained unwritten.

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# MALIGN FIESTA

## WYNDHAM LEWIS

THE HUMAN AGE is undoubtedly Wyndham Lewis's major work. It consists of three volumes in which the author maps out the world after death in a parallel to Dante's *Divine Comedy*. *Malign Fiesta* is the third and last volume, the *Inferno* of the series and in many ways the most powerful. The breadth of Wyndham Lewis's imagination is astonishing and the two protagonists Pullman and Sattersthwaite, who have already encountered many trials and dangers in the transit camp where they found themselves after death in the first volume THE CHILDERMASS, and in the Magnetic City in MONSTRE GAI, its successor, now run up against the full gamut of the supernatural in the great clash between the angels of God and their diabolical opponents. The author had projected a fourth volume to be entitled THE TRIAL OF MAN, but he was never able to write it. As a postscript to MALIGN FIESTA we have included a description of this book as the author described it to Professor Hugh Kenner, so that the reader can visualise how the whole work would have ended. An appendix gives the rejected beginning to THE TRIAL OF MAN, which has not previously appeared in print.

Wyndham Lewis, who died in 1951, was the central figure in the pre-1914 British avant-garde, a great champion of new movements in art and literature and founder of the polemical review BLAST, to which all the war generation of painters, poets, novelists and musicians contributed. He was also the founder of Vorticism, the English counterpart of cubism. His portraits of T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and Edith Sitwell are justly famous as are his many landscapes, but his career as a painter ended early due to blindness. His reputation as a novelist declined in the immediate post-war years as he was suspected of right wing political views at a time when they were unfashionable, but a Wyndham Lewis revival, created principally by publication of *THE HUMAN AGE* in the Jupiter series is now beginning, and he will soon take his rightful place in the mainstream of twentieth century literature.

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